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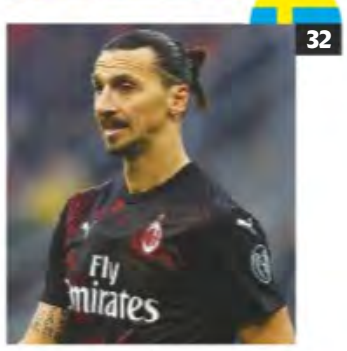

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MEXICO...America's Richard Sanchez (left) challenges Carlos Rodriguez of Monterrey in the second leg of the apertura Final

ITALY...Juan Cuadrado watches from the floor as Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo clears a Roma free-kick

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FROM THE EDITOR

Two of the main stories that we cover this month have a common theme. The Club World Cup (page 62) and the Spanish Super Cup (page 20) were both played in the Middle East, in Qatar and Saudi Arabia respectively.

As we enter a new decade, football clubs and administrators continue to have no qualms about following the money around the globe, even if that means dragging supporters to matches thousands of miles away from home and playing in countries with dubious human-rights records.

> Football clubs and administrators continue to have no qualms about following the money around the globe

The growing global consensus on the need to tackle climate change should be a catalyst forcing football to change tack. But it doesn't appear that much will change in the near future. This summer's European Championship, the second time the finals have been expanded to 24 teams, will be played across the continent at huge cost to fans travelling to and from the 12 different host countries.

Later this year we celebrate our 60th anniversary, having first published in October 1960.

The global game has changed beyond recognition in that time, but bigger does not always mean better.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Liverpool beat Flamengo to win Club World Cup p62
2 Sadio Mane voted CAF Player of the Year p28
3 1966 World Cup winner Martin Peters dies p19
4 Spanish Super Cup played in Saudi Arabia p20
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6 Dortmund sign Haaland from Salzburg p11
7 Ibrahimovic makes surprise move back to Milan p32
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9 Riquelme takes director role at Boca p30
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ITALY

Lazio fined for racist abuse of Mario Balotelli

Lazio have been fined €20,000 for their fans' racist abuse of Brescia striker Mario Balotelli in the latest case of racism in Italian football.

Brescia's Serie A game at home to Lazio was temporarily halted and a stadium announcement made urging away supporters not to sing discriminatory songs about Balotelli.

"Lazio fans that were today at the stadium SHAME ON YOU!" said a social-media post from Balotelli, who opened the scoring in a 2-1 defeat.

Lazio said in a statement: "As always, Lazio dissociates in the most taxing way from the discriminatory behaviour carried out by a very small minority of fans during the match against Brescia. The club once again reiterates its condemnation of such unjustified misconduct and confirms its intent to prosecute those who in fact betray their sporting passion, causing serious damage to the image of the club."

Earlier this season, Balotelli threatened to walk off the pitch when subjected to racial abuse during a game at Verona.

"I liked how they spoke to me then and that's what triggered me. That's when I felt that me and Dortmund was a good match"

Erling Haaland reveals why he opted to join Borussia Dortmund from Red Bull Salzburg

Appeal...Mario Balotelli consults ref Gianluca Manganiello during the Lazio game

GERMANY

Dortmund win battle for Haaland

Borussia Dortmund have signed highly rated 19-year-old striker Erling Haaland from Red Bull Salzburg after paying his €20million release fee.

Son of former Leeds United and Manchester City defender Alf-Inge Haaland, the teenager agreed a contract until 2024 after accepting Dortmund's argument that they were best placed to continue his footballing development.

Manchester United, Juventus and RB Leipzig were all interested in the Norwegian, who scored 16 goals in 14 Austrian Bundesliga games and eight more in the Champions League this season.

"Despite many offers from absolute top clubs from all over Europe, Erling Haaland decided on the sporting task at BVB and the perspective that we have shown him," said Dortmund chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke.

"Our tenacity has paid off."

Choice...Haaland

HEROES & VILLAINS

Foster...last-ditch heroics for an elderly Watford fan

BEN FOSTER

Watford's goalkeeper pulled an 80-year-old fan suffering from dementia out of a roadside ditch after a game. He also invited the supporter to his home for Christmas dinner and offered to pay for his next season ticket.

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Praised for their mental health campaign as all the FA Cup third-round kick-off times were delayed by a minute in order to show a campaign message.

JOKIN APERRIBAY

After his side beat fourth-tier Becerril 8-0 in the Copa del Rey, Real Sociedad's president invited the entire population of the northern Spanish village to a future match. The 754 villagers, along with Becerril's players and staff, will have transport, tickets and dinner paid for at a top-flight game of their choice at the Anoeta Stadium.

No Jokin...Aperribay made offer to an entire village

PEDRO ORTIZ

The goalkeeper saved three penalties as Delfin won their first Ecuadorian title in the club's 30-year history.

No giveaway...Marseille's Nemanja Radonjic

MARSEILLE

The Ligue 1 side, who beat fourth-tier side Trelissac on penalties, refused to honour a custom that professional clubs hand over their proportion of gate receipts to the opposition when playing an amateur team in the Coupe de France.

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Criticised for an FA Cup-streaming deal with betting companies which required fans to place a bet before they could watch third-round matches.

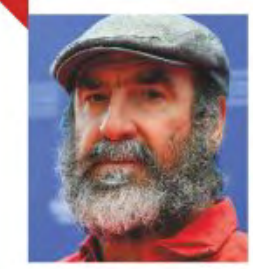
HICHAM TIAZI

The referee was suspended for life by the Royal Moroccan Football Federation after giving four wrongful penalties in the game between Olympique Khouribga and Youssoufia Berrechid.

SAYED BAQER

The Bahrain defender was banned for 10 games after he made slanted-eye gestures towards home fans during November's World Cup qualifier in Hong Kong.

Ban...Sayed Baqer



"Watching United play now is a bit like an old man who is trying to make love. You are trying with all your might but, at the end of the day, everyone's a little disappointed"

Eric Cantona on his former club Manchester United

Exequiel PALACIOS

(Bayer Leverkusen)

Leverkusen has long been a destination for ambitious South Americans looking to make a name for themselves in the European game and, following his €22m January transfer from River Plate, Palacios is the latest starlet to demonstrate that ambition.

Linked with a move ever since his starring role in River's 2018 Libertadores triumph, Real Madrid, Internazionale and Arsenal were among the interested teams, but the central midfielder – who made his Argentina debut in August 2018 – has opted for a club with a track record of signing and developing talent.

Asked if he believes this could be a stepping stone to a bigger team, the 21-year-old said: "That's one of the reasons why I decided to come here.

"I know that Bayer gives me the basis of taking the next step and that the big clubs are keeping an eye on the players from Bayer."

DEJAN KULUSEVSKI
(Juventus)
Signed from Atalanta for €35m, the midfielder has returned on loan to Parma until the end of the season.

MERGIM BERISHA
(Red Bull Salzburg)
The Germany under-21 striker was recalled from a loan at SCR Altach to replace Dortmund-bound Erling Haaland.

STRAHINJA PAVLOVIC
(Monaco)
The defender was signed for €10m then re-joined Partizan Belgrade on loan.

JULIAN WEIGL
(Benfica)
Out of favour at Borussia Dortmund, the Germany midfielder joined the Portuguese champions for €20m.

ADIL AOUCHICHE
(Paris Saint-Germain)
The 17-year-old scored his first senior goal in a 6-0 victory over Linas-Montlhery in the French Cup.

ALEXANDER NUBEL
(Schalke)
The 23-year-old goalkeeper will join Bayern Munich on a free this summer.

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Solskjaer is part of United's problem, not the solution

The angry chants began when Manchester United were 3-0 up in their recent Premier League game against Norwich City and the team looked certain of victory. Only then did the crowd unleash vitriol and disdain towards the club's owners, the reclusive Glazer family, and their man who runs the club, executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward.

It was deliberate timing. Regular supporters at Old Trafford did not want negative vibes to affect player performances. They did not want to impact on manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Clever thinking? Well, only up to a point.

United's fans are right to make the Glazers a prime target of fury. For several years the unwelcome Americans were shielded from scrutiny by the majestic success of manager Alex Ferguson, but now the poverty of their ownership is fully exposed.

It is not that Manchester United lack money. They remain masters of the lucrative commercial deal, with more riches flooding in than any club in the world bar Real Madrid and Barcelona. It is a poverty of intellect.

What they lack is good sense in spending their wealth. What they lack is coherent football strategy and leadership – and the consequence has been several years of missing out on the Champions League.

For so long this essential for a major football club was automatic. Perhaps they will be on the outside again next season.

Transfer policy, commanded by Woodward, has been in constant flux. The world record signing of Paul Pogba has been a failure. The capture of Alexis Sanchez just to stop him going to Manchester City proved a disaster. Now the *Galactico* plan has been abandoned to a focus on acquiring young players of talent and potential.

> Solskjaer's side are wildly inconsistent, with no discernible football style or philosophy

Every choice of manager has been flawed since the dismissal of Ferguson's nominated successor, David Moyes, within a season. Two star names followed, but Louis Van Gaal and Jose Mourinho were yesterday's men compared to Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola.

Now? Well, now there is equal folly, with the owners and their executive vice-chairman seduced into awarding the permanent position to interim manager Solskjaer.

It was a knee-jerk decision, and these are rarely vindicated.

United have been outside the Premier League top four all season. There has been the occasional good win and performance – the product mostly of Marcus Rashford maturing into a world-class forward – but Solskjaer's side are wildly inconsistent, with no discernible football style or philosophy.

Many supporters harbour doubts about the Norwegian as a manager but remember him fondly as a player and the man who scored the winning goal in that impossibly dramatic finale in the 1999 Champions League Final.

There is sympathy and scepticism in equal measure, and fans are unwilling to make him a target of discontent when he is the fall guy for the power-brokers.

Maybe you can't blame them, but a serious truth remains for anyone with Manchester United's fortunes in their heart.

It is that the first-team manager is the most important day-to-day figure at a football club and that Solskjaer is a lightweight figure miscast in a heavyweight role.

He is manager by default rather than grand design, talking too often about the past, referring to how it was at Old Trafford in his playing days. The nostalgic stunt of taking his young squad to practise at the club's old Cliff training ground, to inspire them by evoking the atmosphere of the Ferguson era, was foolish.

While the team has scrambled through the winter, world-class managers have been waiting in the wings: Mauricio Pochettino, who took Tottenham Hotspur to the Champions League Final last season, and former Juventus boss Max Allegri, a five-times winner of Serie A.

They will not wait forever as United owners and fans decline to end their delusion.

The richest football club in England desperately needs more intelligent long-term leadership; at the very least a proper director of football to work on player recruitment and club strategy.

There is no doubt of this. But first comes first – and that is a champion manager. WS

Lightweight...Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was a hero to Manchester United fans as a player, but has he got what it takes to manage?

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

2010-19: football's last golden decade

Record breakers.. Cristiano Ronaldo (left) and Lionel Messi

The past decade may be viewed, in time, as the game's last golden era. From 2010 to 2019 it scaled the highest peaks of worldwide popularity. No other sport approached even the foothills. No other TV competition, not even the Olympic Games, administered such global hypnosis.

The reverse face of the coin was the tarnishing of that gold by criminal skulduggery in the corridors of power. However, the greed which scarred the game would not have been possible without the zillion-dollar temptations generated by the game's acceleration into financial overdrive.

Out on the pitch the dominant force was Spanish. The national team launched the decade by triumphing in both the World Cup in 2010 and the European Championship in 2012, while Real Madrid and Barcelona claimed six Club World Cups between them.

In individual terms, the decade was lorded over by the record-obliterating combat between Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, with their almost grotesque catalogue of records, trophies and personal awards.

All this despite the multiple assaults delivered by doping, match-fixing, state-approved sport-washing and the game's betrayal at the hands of powerful but greedy men who should have known better.

The World Cup is the pinnacle whose flag is the game's progression.

In 2010 it was staged in Africa for the first time, but it was hard work. FIFA had to throw all manner of monies and expertise at South Africa to bring it off and the World Cup will not be going back to Africa any time in the next couple of decades.

Every major sports event comes under fire locally as a wasteful misuse of the host's financial resources and that was the case in South Africa and again in Brazil four years later. And while FIFA cannot be blamed for the incompetence of domestic politicians, it can take the blame for its own failings as exposed by the bidding process for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

Teasing clarification is still awaited over the breadth of the influence of then-UEFA supremo Michel Platini – with his last-minute switch to Qatar – as well as the source of bribes offered to South America's delegates as regaled under oath in a New York court.

> In individual terms, the decade was lorded over by the record-obliterating combat between Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo

By happy contrast, the positive aspect of football was presented by the stars on the pitch. Spain won the 2010 World Cup with a last-gasp goal from Andres Iniesta after Holland tried to kick them off both their triangulated *tika-taka* game and the pitch itself. Iniesta was a core member of the Barcelona group whose possession tactic sparked an evolution in style around the world, albeit accompanied by a jibe that opponents were bored to defeat.

Spain, whose coach Vicente del Bosque owed almost everything to the innovative work at Barca of Pep Guardiola, had won the European crown in 2008 and repeated that success in 2012.

The 2012 staging in Poland and Ukraine marked out a pattern for the future with the acceptance of co-hosting, which aims to spread the staging largesse while easing the financial pain and opening up the dream of performing on the biggest stages to an increasing number of nations clamouring for a greater share of both visibility and TV cash.

Other host nations had their own motives, notably the big political winners in 2010: Russia and Qatar.

International promotion was the theme. For Qatar it was soft power; for Russian president Vladimir Putin it was the bread-and-circuses distraction of a "decade of sport".

No World Cup has ever been organised more efficiently than by the Russians in 2018, who set a devastating standard for Qatar to match in 2022. Then co-hosting will become the norm in 2026 (US, Canada and Mexico) and probably 2030 (in Europe or South America).

UEFA reverted to a lone host for the Euro in 2016, when hosts France were overturned in "their" Final by Ronaldo's

Portugal, but UEFA will go co-hosting mad with this summer's tournament, spread across 12 nations.

The standard of play at the finals of both World Cups and European Championships improved over the decade after disappointing lows in 2010 and 2012 respectively. For the upgrade, the lawmakers can take some credit with efforts to speed up play and the advent of technological assistance. Goal-line technology was an instant success, while VAR brings elements of complicating subjectivity but it will work eventually and the attraction of football in the modern era will be all the better for it.

Improving standards at national-team level have been founded on the work undertaken in the club sphere. Here an increasing understanding of the value of good coaching – from small children to walking-football pensioners – has been crucial. Hence the value of the coaching development programmes devised by FIFA and UEFA and now being emulated worldwide.

A reshuffling of the balance of power among nations over the decade was seen most dramatically in Italy's regression.

Once upon a time Serie A was Eldorado. No more. The clubs' earning potential was frozen by the inability to develop their municipal stadia just as English, German and Spanish clubs turned their own matchday homes into commercial enterprises.

Along the way the racism scourge has also exposed Italian football as living in a deeply depressing past. But that issue remains social as much as sport's.

Spain's national team are now not quite what they were, while Real Madrid's Champions League hat-trick between 2016 and 2018 may prove beyond equal for many more years.

But not all of the decade was crowd-pleasingly brilliant. Off-screen the level of corruption reached record levels. The nadir was plumbed in 2015 when the US Attorney-General Loretta Lynch lifted the lid on the Americans' shaming FIFAGate investigation, although some damage-limitation defenders still insist that the scandal should be termed CONCACAF-Gate because the network of shame began with the tax-haven, pocket-lining antics of Jack Warner, Chuck Blazer and company. In fact it was the unscrutinised membership of the FIFA inner circle – aided and abetted by Sepp Blatter's wilful blind eye – which enabled a gang of powerbrokers to rob the game.

The FIFAGate process should be wrapped within the first years of the new decade, in the US courts and FIFA ethics committee, but the game will still not be safe. Further aggressive assaults on the spirit of football in particular and sport in general rave on. Match-fixing is one, a perpetual stain; doping is another, albeit less of a threat to football than to the individualised sports such as cycling.

A new decade brings new challenges. For FIFA it means maintaining some sort of connection between the breathless rest of the world and Europe, whose relentless onward march under UEFA generates more than 90 per cent of the game's wealth and will continue to attract its finest players.

Gianni Infantino, provided he does not let it all go to his head, can still be president of FIFA in 2030 when the worth of his expanded World Cup and Club World Cup can be properly evaluated.

Women's football will continue to expand apace, although one quarter of FIFA's 211-strong membership still do not have an active women's national team.

Otherwise, little may change within Infantino's kingdom and Asia will still struggle to balance east and west amid the Chinese-enhanced political tensions while Africa will remain a challenge largely to itself let alone anyone else.

So much, so clear, it would seem. But not the answer to the most important question of all: who will be our Di Stefano and Puskas or Pele and Cruyff...or Messi and Ronaldo? WS

ON TOP OF THE WORLD 2010-19

WORLD CUP
Spain, Germany, France

CLUB WORLD CUP
Real Madrid (four), Barcelona (two), Bayern Munich, Corinthians, Internazionale, Liverpool

WINNERS

RB LEIPZIG
Became the first club from the old East Germany to top the Bundesliga at the winter halfway stage, as well as the first side in Bundesliga history to score three goals in eight consecutive games.

VISSEL KOBE
Inspired by Andres Iniesta, they won the first silverware of their 54-year history by beating Kashima Antlers in the Emperor's Cup Final.

LIVERPOOL
Won the Club World Cup for the first time, beating Flamengo 1-0 in the Final thanks to a goal from Roberto Firmino.

LOSERS

MILAN
Suffered their heaviest defeat for more than 21 years in Serie A when they were beaten 5-0 by Atalanta.

DANIEL STENDEL
A defeat in the Edinburgh derby at home to Hibernian meant that Hearts boss Stendel became the club's first manager in 82 years to lose his first four games in charge.

WENDIE RENARD
The France defender left the trophy she received for being named in FIFA's team of the year on a train when travelling between Paris and Lyon.

Paul GARDNER

GLOBAL VIEW

VAR: from the subliminal to the ridiculous

Overruled...a familiar sight

A young Jimmy Greaves once made the observation that football was getting more complicated. That was back in the 1960s and he was commenting, unfavourably, on the licensed coaches who were bringing a new and highly technical approach to the English game.

The quote survives in different forms, of which my favourite version goes like this: "The way those guys talk, you'd think scoring a goal is more difficult than splitting the atom."

Now, here we are in 2020, and VAR has plunged us back 60 years, back into the impossibly complicated world of atomic physics – which is a world where football does not belong.

There can be no arguing against the birth of VAR. Technology, advancing by leaps and bounds, gave us TV replays, then iPads and mobile phones, until any refereeing error was immediately exposed to the whole world. Except, of course, to the one man who really mattered: the referee himself.

So technology gave us VAR with the admirable intention of clearing up that mess, of allowing a quick video-review and, if necessary, a reversal of the referee's call. So far, so good.

Even better was the vital caution that FIFA added to its VAR Protocol: that VAR should be used only to correct "clear and obvious" errors and "serious missed" incidents. That caveat was vital to make sure VAR was not repeatedly brought into action to review all manner of referee calls.

But a major problem has developed. Throughout their 150-year life, football's rules have maintained a staunchly pro-defence attitude. Scoring goals has been made difficult, as it should be, but now absurdly so. We all know that to score a goal all of the ball must pass over all of the goal line. No half measures here. In disputed calls, the odds are heavily in favour of a "no goal" decision.

VAR can now be called on for supporting evidence. Which ought to mean a clear, objective, unbiased call. Forget it. The rules are weighted against a pro-goal decision. And that weight increases when an already pro-defence video ref makes his judgment.

The problem becomes serious because that caveat about "serious and obvious errors" is completely ignored if a goal has been scored. That is a special case and VAR is allowed to look at the build-up – looking, obviously, for one thing only: a reason to cancel the goal. It may be a minimal handball or a slight push, but the most frequently found offence is offside.

Usually these offside calls are

Unpopular...many fans dislike VAR

blatantly absurd, as slight as the merest projection of a toenail or a kneecap; calls that no human eye can detect, meaning that they cannot be "clear and obvious" referee errors. Yet these subliminal calls are repeatedly accepted as strong enough reasons for ruling out goals.

These decisions fly in the face of VAR Protocol, which states the ref's original decision "will not be changed" unless VAR proves a "clear and obvious" error.

There is another reason to be suspicious of these VAR offside calls. At the other end of an offside call is the team-mate providing the assist. The exact instant at which the ball is passed must be recorded. That moment has then to be co-ordinated with the exact positions of toenails and kneecaps. No wonder VAR decisions entail delays.

The nonsense surrounding these millimetric offside decisions can be quite easily banished by insisting that any call

> Here we are in 2020, and VAR has plunged us back 60 years

must involve a measurement that can be detected by the human eye. If there is genuine uncertainty there can be no clear and obvious error. The original referee human-eye call must stand.

The argument against everything I have just laid out is that VAR is impartial, therefore its decisions will strike a fair balance between goal and no-goal decisions. But that doesn't happen. The "no goal" sign is the one we keep seeing, with quite likely a well-worked goal ruled out by an errant toenail.

One feels an impulse to get as precise and picky as the VAR and point out that it is the tip of the player's boot that is offside, whereas the rules specify "feet"...

Ultimately, what ensures that VAR will be a negative, anti-goal system is that it operates within the long-standing referee culture that is always looking to resolve doubtful plays in favour of defenders.

That bias may not be easy to get rid of, but it will have to go if VAR is to prove a reliable aid to refereeing. WS

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Lines...things weren't straight forward at Verona

1 TAXI FOR HAKAN SUKUR

Former Turkey international Hakan Sukur is working as a taxi driver in the USA these days after being driven out of his home country following a dispute with its ruling president, Recep Erdogan.

Sukur, who played at the 2002 World Cup and won the 2000 UEFA Cup with Galatasaray, went into politics after retiring as a player in 2008. He won a seat in parliament in 2011 as a member of the ruling AKP party, but fell out with Erdogan and was accused of plotting to overthrow him as a member of the Gulen opposition movement, which is classed as a terrorist organisation in Turkey.

In 2017 he moved to the US in exile, with his wife and children, and says: "I have nothing left, Erdogan took everything: my right to liberty, freedom of expression and right to work. Nobody seems able to explain what my role in this coup was supposed to be. I never did anything illegal, I am not a traitor or a terrorist.

"I might be an enemy of this government, but not the state or the Turkish nation. I love my country.

"After the split with Erdogan, I started to receive threats. My wife's shop was attacked, my children were harassed, my father put in prison and all my assets confiscated.

"So I moved to the United States, initially running a cafe in California, but strange people kept coming into the bar.

"Now I drive for Uber and I sell books."

Driven out... Hakan Sukur

2 WONKY LINES DELAY SERIE A GAME

Verona's recent 2-1 victory at home to Genoa in Serie A had to be delayed by 15 minutes because the penalty-area lines were not straight.

Referee Maurizio Mariani noticed the problem at the Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi during his pre-match inspection of the pitch.

Kick-off had to be suspended while Verona ground staff had "to redraw the lines that mark the penalty areas".

3 CHRISTMAS DAY FOOTBALL FOR EX-PRESIDENT

Now a political refugee in Argentina, the exiled former president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, has always been keen to put on a pair of football boots. And it was no different this Christmas Day when he joined in a game with members of the Bolivian community in the Argentinian capital at the Campo De Deportes del Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires.

Morales who was forced to resign following a wave of protests, and under pressure from police and the military in his homeland, spent a month in Mexico before arriving in Argentina in December, having fled Bolivia when a warrant was issued for his arrest.

4 PORTUGAL TRIUMPH ON THE BEACH

Portugal beat Italy to win their third Beach Soccer World Cup.

A hat-trick from Jordan Santos, two goals from Leo Martins and one from Lourenco gave the Portuguese a 6-4 win over their opponents in Paraguay.

Now held every two years, Portugal also won the tournament in 2015 and 2001, making them the second-most successful country in the beach soccer format. They still, however, have a long way to go to catch up with Brazil, who have won the tournament 14 times since it began in 1995.

Sand kings...Portugal (in white) beat Italy in the Final

"I'm finally here. I will make San Siro jump for joy again"

Zlatan Ibrahimovic modestly announces his return to Milan

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

Chinese task... Giovanni Van Bronckhorst

EUROPE

Manchester City assistant manager **MIKEL ARTETA** joined Arsenal and became the Premier League's youngest manager at 37. **CARLO ANCELOTTI** took charge of Everton, while **DAVID MOYES** returned as West Ham United boss after they dismissed Manuel Pellegrini.

Barcelona dismissed Ernesto Valverde and replaced him with former Real Betis coach **QUIQUE SETIEN**.

Eredivisie strugglers ADO Den Haag appointed **ALAN PARDEW** as coach, with **CHRIS POWELL** as his assistant.

Monaco appointed former Spain boss **ROBERT MORENO** as coach after sacking Leonardo Jardim.

GIUSEPPE IACHINI was appointed coach of Fiorentina, who sacked Vincenzo Montella. Genoa made **DAVIDE NICOLA** their third coach of the season.

Former Italy under-21 chief **DEVIS MANGIA** was appointed coach of Malta.

New team...ADO Den Haag general director Mohammed Hamdi with Alan Pardew (right) and Chris Powell

DEJAN STANKOVIC left his role at Internazionale youth academy to take charge of Serb side Red Star Belgrade.

ABELARDO FERNANDEZ replaced Pablo Machin as coach of Espanyol with the side bottom of La Liga.

Despite being in the last 32 of the Europa League, Braga sacked Ricardo Sa Pinto and brought in **RUBEN AMORIM**.

Kilmarnock appointed **ALEX DYER** as manager until the end of the Scottish Premiership season after they dismissed Angelo Alessio.

SOUTH AMERICA

JORDI CRUYFF was appointed national coach of Ecuador.

RAFAEL DUDAMEL stepped down as coach of Venezuela to take over at Brazilian club Atletico Mineiro.

CONCACAF

Vancouver Whitecaps paid a club-record fee for Canadian striker **LUCAS CAVALLINI**, with reports suggesting Mexican side Puebla received $6million.

New MLS side Inter Miami named two-time CONCACAF Champions League-winning boss **DIEGO ALONSO** as their first coach. Former Celtic manager **RONNY DEILA** left Valerenga in his Norwegian homeland to take charge of New York City.

Former Bahrain and New Zealand national coach **ANTHONY HUDSON** took charge of the USA's under-20 side.

AFRICA

VICTORIA CONTEH became the first woman to coach a men's team in the Sierra Leone Premier League after joining East End Tigers.

Former Croatia coach **ANTE CACIC** took charge of Egyptian side Pyramids.

ASIA

LI TIE was named coach of China, while Serbian **IVAN JOVANOVIC** took charge of United Arab Emirates.

GIOVANNI VAN BRONCKHORST was appointed coach of Chinese side Guangzhou R&F.

Record... Lucas Cavallini

Forlan takes charge of Penarol

DIEGO FORLAN was named coach of Penarol after announcing his retirement as a player at the end of last year. The former Manchester United, Villarreal and Atletico Madrid striker won the 2016 Uruguayan championship with Penarol in his only season as a player with the club.

"I am happy with my life. I played on two teams that I really love. One meant everything and the other got me inside as I expected"

Daniele De Rossi confirms his retirement

Appointments, sackings and loans

Gone...Antoine Kombouare

OUT

EUROPE

MARK VAN BOMMEL was sacked by PSV after a run of just two wins in eight games in the Eredivise.

Bottom of Ligue 1, Toulouse sacked coach **ANTOINE KOMBOUARE**.

CONCACAF

Newcastle Jets fired coach **ERNIE MERRICK** after a poor start to the A-League season.

AFRICA

KWESI APPIAH's second stint in charge of Ghana came to an end.

French coach **SEBASTIEN DESABRE**, who led Uganda at the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations, parted company with Egyptian Premier League side Pyramids.

ASIA

After 135 appearances for his country, Oman keeper **ALI AL HABSI** announced his international retirement, aged 38.

De Rossi calls it a day

Italian World Cup winner **DANIELE DE ROSSI** announced his retirement at the age of 36 after leaving Argentinian side Boca Juniors, who he joined last summer.

Prior to joining Boca, 36-year-old De Rossi spent his entire career at Serie A club Roma, making 616 appearances.

OBITUARIES

MARTIN PETERS (1943-2019)

Had it not been for Wolfgang Weber, Martin Peters would have gone down in English football history as not only one of the 1966 World Cup winners but the 1966 World Cup winner.

Then a 22-year-old half-back with West Ham United, he had been drafted into the England team by Alf Ramsey midway through the finals after the attack misfired at the start of the group stage.

In the Final against West Germany, at Wembley, it was Peters who stretched a leg forward in the 78th minute to jab England into a 2-1 lead. But as history beckoned both team and individual, in the last minute of stoppage time Weber equalised and the Final went to extra time, where it was Peters' club-mate Geoff Hurst who scored twice to complete his hat-trick and steal the show.

Ramsey never had any doubt about Peters' quality, which permitted him a rare versatility. "Martin Peters," said Ramsey, "is a player who is 10 years ahead of his time."

Although that now famous comment was dismissed at the time, Peters would prove his England boss right as greatly improved training techniques, new fitness regimes and facilities saw the development of "Total Football" and the evolution of a whole new football era.

Martin Peters becomes the fifth member of England's World Cup-winning team to have died, along with Bobby Moore, Alan Ball, Ray Wilson and Gordon Banks.

Peters rose through the West Ham academy, having signed as an apprentice in 1959, and helped the club to win the European Cup-winners' Cup in 1965, alongside Hurst and club-and-country captain Moore.

After 364 games and 100 goals, Peters left West Ham for Tottenham Hotspur in 1970, becoming Britain's first £200,000 footballer in a deal that saw Jimmy Greaves head in the opposite direction.

Peters helped Spurs manager Bill Nicholson to win the League Cup at Wembley in 1971 and again, as captain, in 1973, a season after playing his part in the club's UEFA Cup victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers. He went on to play for Norwich City and Sheffield United before retiring in 1981, three years after being awarded the MBE following 20 goals in 67 appearances for England.

In 2016 it was revealed Peters had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, one of several of the 1966 team to be battling dementia.

Keir Radnedge

HANS TILKOWSKI (1935-2020)

West Germany's goalkeeper in the 1966 World Cup Final, he played 39 times for his country and was their player of the year in 1965.

He made over 350 appearances for Westfalia Herne, Borussia Dortmund and Eintracht Frankfurt, winning the DFB-Pokal and European Cup-winners Cup during his time with Dortmund.

As a coach he had two spells as boss of Werder Bremen as well as taking charge at Munich 1860, Nuremberg, Saarbrucken and Greek side AEK Athens.

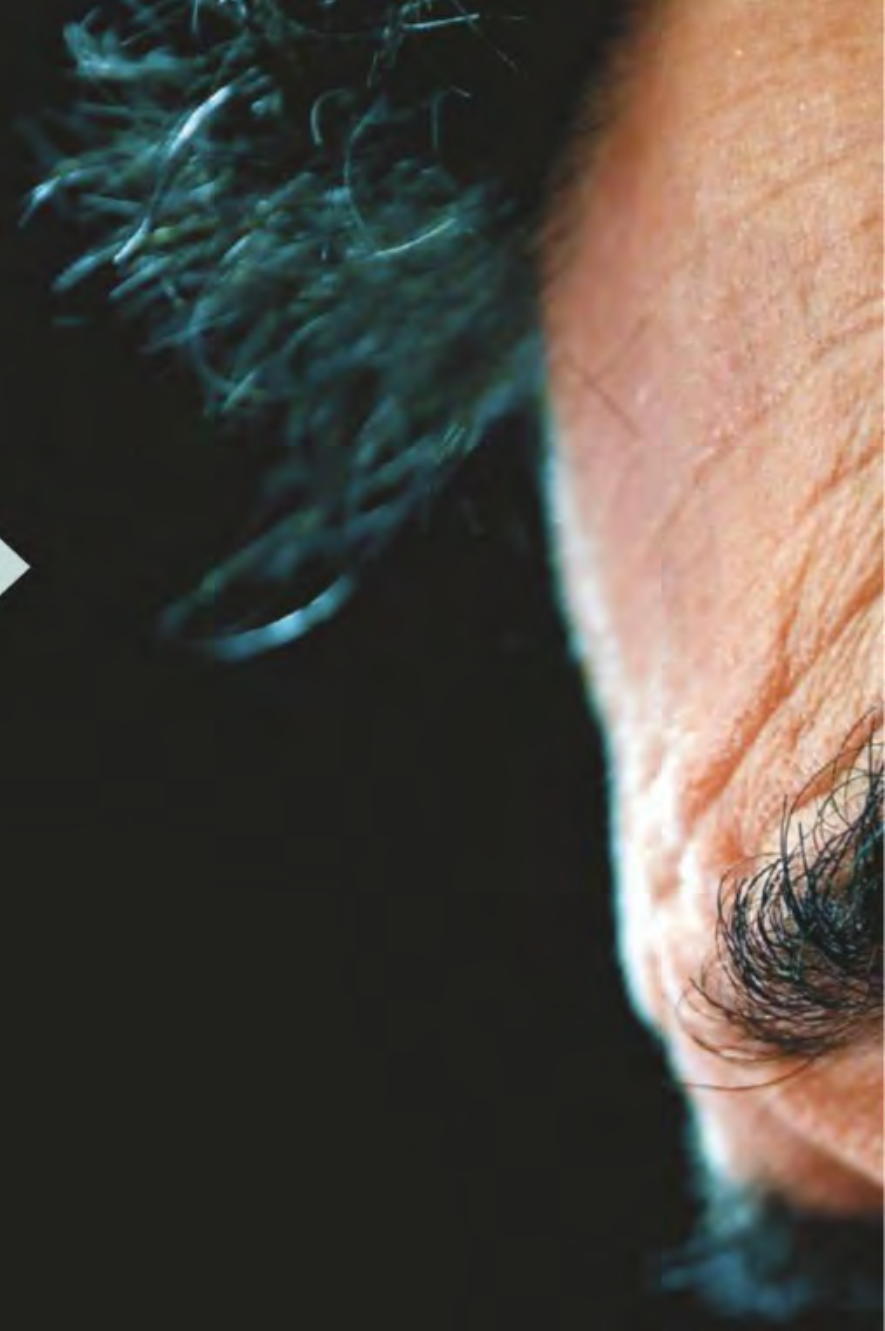
BILLY HUGHES (1948-2019)

Scored 81 goals in 335 games for Sunderland, including the semi-final winner against Arsenal on route to success in the FA Cup Final in 1973.

Capped once by Scotland, his brother John was part of the Celtic squad that won the European Cup in 1967, although he didn't play in the Final.

eye witness

Sid Lowe reports



SPAIN

Barcelona botch Valverde departure

"It feels a bit strange, but here we are," said Ernesto Valverde, the only one of the four coaches travelling to Saudi Arabia for the Spanish Super Cup to publicly say that there was something not quite right about it.

He might not have launched a furious attack on the format or the choice of location, and nor did he engage in a deep discussion of human rights, but on the eve of his side's first game – which turned out to be his last – Barcelona's boss raised doubts. "It's not the same as playing at home," he commented.

Perhaps he could feel it; maybe some part of him suspected that something was wrong. Yet even he, long since tired of what was happening at the club, wondering if he had made the right decision to continue, could never ▸

have imagined what unfolded over the next few days – and how fast.

Standing there at the side of the pitch in Jeddah, every time Valverde appeared on the giant screen, Saudi fans booed him. But if he didn't much like what he heard, he was enjoying what he saw.

With nine minutes left against Atletico Madrid, Barca were leading 2-1 and only the VAR meant that it wasn't more. An offside barely the width of Arturo Vidal's mohican saw one goal ruled out, another was taken away when Lionel Messi was judged to have handled. When Vidal got taken out by Saul in the area, nothing happened. It could have been three or four or more. They were playing better than they had all season.

Pressure...Sergi Roberto tries to clear

Atletico were "practically dead", Messi said afterwards. And then it happened. Another collapse to remind them of Liverpool and Rome. Atletico weren't dead after all.

"It was very strange," Angel Correa said. Atleti coach Diego Simeone added: "Their second disallowed goal was key."

Whatever it was, Barcelona fell apart. Suddenly they were wide open, with massive gaps right through the middle, entirely exposed. And Atletico punished them. On 82 minutes they made it 2-2. On 87 it was 3-2. Then Marcos Llorente ran through and almost scored Atletico's fourth. Meanwhile, Gerard Pique got away with a handball inside his area.

The capitulation was complete. At the final whistle, Messi walked away in silence. Atletico fans celebrated – there were about 12 of them. One Saudi supporter stood, holding a piece of card on which he'd written: "Valverde out."

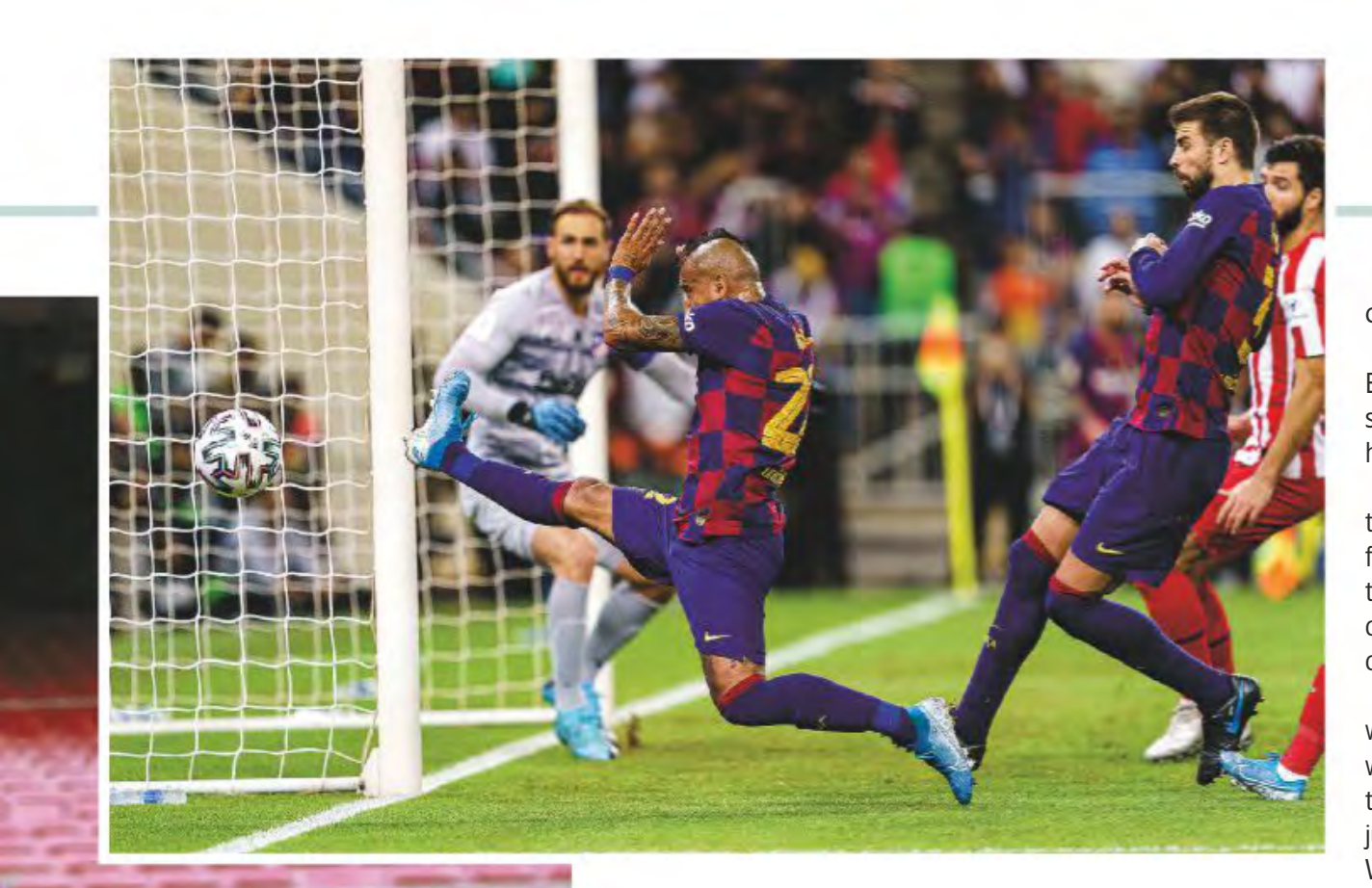
Which was exactly what was about to happen.

"Managers are always subject to instability," Valverde said. But surely he wasn't about to be sacked? Not for what happened in the Super Cup, the least important competition of all, however much it had been taken 6,000km away?

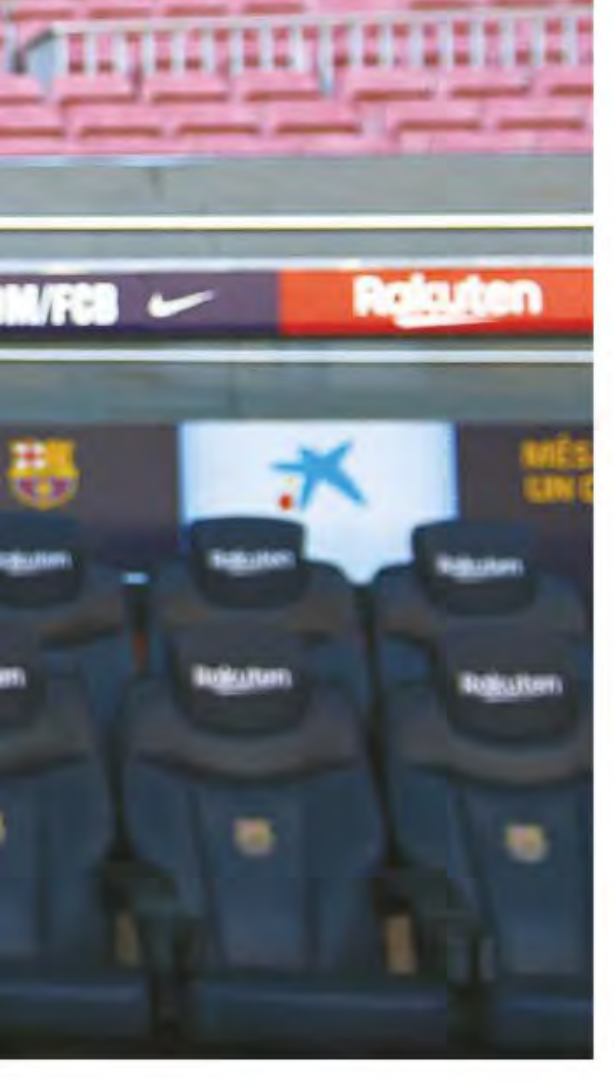
In fact, that was partly why it was taken away. It was something they could sell and just about get away with it. There were many reasons not to go. There were many reasons to go too: one hundred

Hope...Quique Setien

Too soon...Xavi



Close...Arturo Vidal



and twenty million reasons in fact. And now Barca were coming back, fallen at the first. Valverde would fall not long after. Going to Saudi Arabia cost the title, their best player of late, and their coach. But, hey, at least it had gained them loads of cash.

Afterwards, the players defended Valverde, suggesting it was not his fault. Luis Suarez spoke of individual errors, as did Antoine Griezmann, while Messi insisted: "We have to be more united than ever." His words were a little less committed than normal, perhaps, but when he was asked if he was defending the coach he insisted that he had just said that and walked away.

Barcelona flew out the next morning. They had lost the Spanish Super Cup, they had lost their best striker, with Luis Suarez going under the knife for an operation on his meniscus and out of action for four months – raising the possibility that he might not play for the club again – and five days later they had lost their coach.

Within hours, Barcelona's sporting director Eric Abidal and the club's CEO Oscar Grau had travelled to Qatar, where they offered his job to Xavi, who turned it down. "It was too soon," he would say a few days later. But it was out in the open now, and so Barcelona were backed into a corner. It was going to be very hard to keep Valverde now and for him to have any kind of authority. And so there was an accelerated search for a replacement.

Although that was played out in public, Valverde still wasn't told. They asked Ronald Koeman. They spoke to Thierry Henry. To Mauricio Pochettino. And then they phoned Quique Setien.

"I was walking past the cows in my town when they rang me yesterday," he said at his presentation. "And the next morning I was at the training ground coaching the best player in the world."

> "I was walking past the cows in my town when they rang me yesterday. And the next morning I was at the training ground coaching the best player in the world" **Quique Setien**

That was pretty embarrassing for the Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu, sitting next to him trying to claim that this hadn't been done in a hurry.

Valverde was sacked with Barcelona top, only the second coach to suffer that fate, after Radi Antic at Real Madrid. In two years, he had won two league titles, one Copa del Rey and reached the Final of another.

But there had been doubts about the way they played, a sense of lost identity which Setien was signed to restore, and they had regressed this season, winning just four of 10 away games in La Liga. Worse, those Champions League defeats had weighed heavily, for how they happened as much as the fact that they happened. Twice they saw three-goal leads slip away.

Now another lead slipped, and although it was in the Super Cup, it was the last straw. What many couldn't work out was the timing. Why now? Why not before? In truth, few complained about the decision. What they didn't like was the manner with which it was managed, the fact that it forced them into seeking a solution faster than was advisable.

"I would have liked to have done things differently," Bartomeu conceded.

On the Monday morning, knowing that Barcelona were openly negotiating with replacements, Valverde had taken the training session, a public expression of how badly this had been handled. It would be his last, which was common knowledge even if at the club they pretended otherwise.

At the end of it, the president was waiting, to deliver the news he already knew. Ernesto Valverde, tired of it all, was sacked. An agreement was reached: they would pay off his contract and he could go. He was free.

As he left, behind the wheel of his car, photographers snapped away. Barcelona's ex-coach smiled and waved. He looked happier than he had for months. WS

United...Lionel Messi reflects on defeat

eyewitness

Steve Menary reports

CYPRUS

Ambitious Pafos think big

Backed by Russian money, a new club is challenging the existing order

Half-a-dozen clubs with origins that reflect the island's cultural and political make-up dominate Cypriot football, but a new challenge is emerging. Following in the footsteps of the Greeks, Turks and British, Russians are flocking to the Mediterranean island seeking security and sun.

The Russians initially brought money and colonised the banks in Cyprus, only to pull out billions six years ago when the island's economy went into meltdown and the European Union imposed a financial "haircut".

To stem the departures, the Cypriot government created a "golden visa" scheme that offered residency rights in return for investment in property development. As a result, there are now so many Russians with a Cypriot passport that two years ago they formed their own political party. And their influence has now spilled onto the football pitch.

Pafos FC were formed in 2014 with the merger of AEK Kouklia and AEP Pafos. Kouklia chairman Christakis Kaizer drove the plan, but two Russian exiles, Roman Dubov and Sergey Lomakin, bought into Pafos in 2017 after the club had secured promotion to the top flight.

A new board was formed with Christos Glykis installed as president. Anton Evmenov was recruited as sporting director, and the ex-Zenit head scout described the project as a "football club ...practically being started from scratch".

Pafos finished ninth in the Cypriot First Division in their debut campaign after recruiting Steven Pressley as coach in February 2018. After losing their first four matches last season, the former Scotland international defender was sacked by Lomakin, who had replaced Glykis as president. Ex-Hajduk Split boss Zeljko Kopic restored momentum and Pafos recovered to finish eighth despite a seven-point deduction for fielding an unregistered player.

Last summer Pafos began to spend heavily in an ambitious bid to take on the country's old guard. In August, veteran Premier League midfielder Jason Puncheon was signed in a deal reputedly worth €370,000 a year. Pafos hailed the signing of the nomadic 33-year-old – who had most recently been on loan at Huddersfield Town from Crystal Palace – as one of the most important in Cypriot history. While that claim may have prompted wry smiles, the club have reportedly been the second-biggest spenders in the league this season.

> Pafos hailed the signing of Jason Puncheon as one of the most important in Cypriot history

Veteran...Pafos' Jason Puncheon played over 200 Premier League games

Welsh international Joe Ledley came on trial and played in a friendly before opting to return to Britain, but plenty of other seasoned internationals are now at Pafos. Slovakia striker Adam Nemec lines up alongside USA midfielder Danny Williams, Mali's Bakary Sako, Kevin Lafrance of Haiti, Paulus Arajuuri from Finland and Angolan forward Va.

Recruiting heavily from overseas is common in Cyprus, where 66.8 per cent of those playing in the top flight are from overseas, according to recent research by the Swiss-based CIES Football Observatory. While that is the highest level in any of Europe's top 31 leagues, Pafos have taken recruiting of foreigners to a new level and 93.5 per

Success...Pafos celebrate on their way to victory over Omonia earlier this season

Picture: Savvides Press & Getty Images

cent of their squad are non-Cypriot according to CIES.

At the start of this season Pafos were widely expected to break into the top six. But while challenging Limassol clubs AEL and Apollon Limassol, as well as Larnaca-based AEK and Anorthosis Famagusta, may be achievable, matching the big guns from the capital Nicosia in terms of support or achievements is a tough prospect.

In Europe's last divided city – which was split by the Turkish invasion of 1974 – Omonia are the most popular club. Financially stricken, they have struggled in recent years before New York-based Cypriot investor Stavros Papastavrou bailed them out in 2018.

With their finances stabilised, Omonia set the early pace this season and fans are returning. But with a population of just 36,000, Pafos lag well behind in terms of support.

While many Russians live along the coast in the resort of Limassol, Pafos is not an expat club. Centre-back Pavel Lelyuhkin, who is 21, is the only Russian on the field, where the benchmark remains perennial champions APOEL.

Champions League quarter-finalists in 2012, APOEL have won every domestic league title since 2013 and this season they are through to the knockout stage of the Europa League, where they will face Basle of Switzerland.

Buoyed by UEFA money, APOEL were champions for a record-extending 28th time last season, but Pafos won 2-1 in Nicosia and were only let down by inconsistent results against lower sides.

"We have made great progress compared to the season before last in all components of a football club, but we are not in the desired place," said Dubov last summer.

Financially, that is an understatement. In 2018, accounts filed with the Cypriot FA show that Pafos FC had revenue of

Multi-national... few of Pafos' side are Cypriot

€843,750 but what are described as "direct football expenses" of €2.5million.

The club was advanced €2m from its shareholders but that investment was burned up by salaries and other expenditure and the club posted a loss of just under €2m in 2018.

According to Dubov's website, the stake in Pafos is controlled through Total Sports Investments (TSI), which is a limited liability partnership registered in the UK. TSI was set up in 2016 with three directors: Olga and Roman Dubov, and Giedrus Pukas, a Russian-based Lithuanian, who owns and runs Quadro Capital. In 2017, Pukas resigned, leaving TSI to the Dubovs.

Under UK company law, any accounts with turnover of less than £632,000 are deemed micro entities. Revenue and profit does not have to be declared but the 2018 accounts for TSI show a loss of £85,414.

Fragile finances are common in weaker European leagues such as Cyprus, as UEFA acknowledges in its latest financial report.

"Many middle- and lower-income clubs are still reliant on donations and other types of income," notes UEFA. "Other revenues include numerous items, but donations and grants are the most common. The relatively large percentage of revenue coming from this source underlines the precarious nature of club finances in many middle- and lower-income leagues."

Clubs that turn over less than €5m are not covered by UEFA's Financial Fairplay regulations so investors like Lomakin and Dubov can prop up clubs for as long as they see fit.

Pafos do have sponsorship from the likes of local developer Korantina Homes, and also from domestic TV income, which is relatively large for a country of a million people. In 2018, Pafos received €385,000 for domestic TV rights and €301,503 from UEFA, which pools money to help clubs be more sustainable.

Dubov also claims player sales, such as Scottish defender Kevin Holt back to Queen of the South, Swiss goalkeeper Joel Mall to Apollon Limassol and Jander to Serbia's Red Star Belgrade, generated income. The fee for Jander was not disclosed but Pafos described it as a club record.

Short deal...Giorgos Valerianos on loan at Riga from Pafos

"I think we will beat the transfer record of the club for the transfer period, and we will get more than €500,000 in profits for the players, but let's not run ahead of ourselves," said Dubov last summer, before Pafos' latest spending spree on the likes of Puncheon.

However, balancing the books – certainly through activities in Cyprus – may prove difficult and the independent auditors of the last accounts for Pafos were not impressed. In a note with the 2018 accounts, A Soutzis Audit Limited concluded: "We have been unable to gather sufficient appropriate audit evidence to satisfy ourselves to the completeness and accuracy of the information provided by the company's management due to the lack of sufficient and clearly presented accounting records.

"There were no other satisfactory audit procedures that we could adopt to satisfy ourselves that the recorded balances as mentioned above were free from material misstatements and we have been unable to gather appropriate audit evidence to satisfy ourselves as to the completeness and accuracy of the bank balances for

International...Pafos' Finnish defender Paulus Arajuuri

Euro adventure... Riga's Roman Debelko

the year to December 2018."

Despite being unable to find yearly bank statements and reports, the club's accounts were still signed off.

TSI's website claims partners such as Coventry City, who confirmed no such partnership exists, and even Portsmouth – which seems highly unlikely given Dubov's previous involvement with the League One club.

In 2010 the Convers Sports Initiatives (CSI) group bought into Portsmouth and Dubov was the second biggest shareholder with a 15 per cent stake. Plenty of promises were made, but after CSI's main shareholder Vladimir Antonov was arrested for asset-stripping at Bankas Snoras, a Lithuanian bank of which he was chairperson and majority owner, the plans unravelled.

Antonov fled, abandoning Dubov, and in early 2012 Portsmouth collapsed into administration for a second time in three years. In March 2019, Antonov was jailed for two-and-a-half years in Russia for bank fraud.

Apart from a drink driving charge in Kent last year, Dubov has steered clear of trouble as he tries to revive his reputation as a self-styled soccer investor.

Less is known about his partner Lomakin, who has been linked in the Russian media with Andrey Kostin, the president of Russian bank VTB and a key ally of Vladimir Putin.

Lomakin and Dubov rarely grant interviews, which makes getting explanations for the finances and alleged partnerships difficult. But what is known is that they have already won two titles and millions of Euros in UEFA prize money – in Latvia.

Riga FC were also formed in 2014 from a merger between Caramba Riga and Dinamo Riga. Initially known as FC Caramba/Dinamo, the club changed its name to Riga FC after winning promotion to the top flight in 2015.

Riga finished fifth in their first season in the top flight in 2016 then third in 2017 to qualify for the Europa League only to fall in the first qualifying round to CSKA Sofia. Last year, under Ukrainian coach Viktor Skrypnyk, Riga won their first Virsliga title and the national cup.

Their debut Champions League season was ended at the first hurdle by Irish side Dundalk in July, but after dropping into the Europa League they saw off Polish side Piast Gliwice and Finland's HJK only to be edged out 3-2 on aggregate by Copenhagen in the play-off round.

That adventure was one of the best performances by a Latvian club in Europe for many years and earned Riga just over €1.3m in UEFA prize money.

Riga's title push and European adventure benefitted from a number of players on contract at Pafos – such as Norway international Abdisalam Ibrahim – being sent on loan to the Latvian club. After Riga's elimination at the end of August, some players – including Greek defender Giorgos Valerianos and French striker Kevin Berigaud – returned to Cyprus to aid Pafos' league campaign.

Even without these players Riga were strong enough to win the 2019 Virsliga, which finished in November. This guarantees another European campaign next season and more UEFA prize money, which is sizeable compared to the cost base. In 2017, average club revenue in the Latvian Virsliga was €637,500.

Pafos and Riga are among a growing number of teams with cross-border financial links. According to the UEFA financial report, 15 top-flight clubs reported "ownership or shareholding links"' in 2017. That number has since grown at a lower level as taking control of financially weak clubs can be achieved for relatively little outlay by businessmen such as Lomakin and Dubov.

The duo have shown that clever use of the loan system can pay off, although the late returning players and fresh signings have yet to work in Cyprus, where Pafos still suffer from inconsistency. Despite October's victory over Omonia they are flirting with relegation this season, and Kopic was sacked in November.

TSI brought in respected Riga director Pavel Gognidze as chief executive and recruited Cameron Toshack – the son of Welsh legend John – as coach from Swansea City, where he had been in charge of their under-23 side, and he came with his sidekick Gary Richards.

Renowned for developing and bringing through such talent as Premier League players Dan James of Manchester United and Sheffield United's Oli McBurnie, Toshack's appointment on an 18-month deal is interesting given the concentration of overseas players at Pafos.

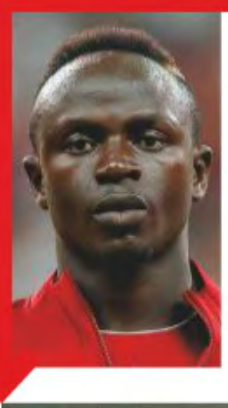
Although TSI have been investing in new training facilities for Pafos, taking the job is a brave and adventurous move by Toshack as he tries to help the Russian duo's Cypriot dream match their achievements in the Baltic. WS

Exit...Copenhagen fans watch their side beat Riga

Champions League...Riga's Kriss Karklins (right) and Jamie McGrath of Dundalk

> Lomakin and Dubov have won two titles and millions of Euros in UEFA prize money – in Latvia

Headliners



Sadio Mane

Liverpool forward named African Footballer of the Year

Presentation...the awards ceremony in Egypt

Sadio Mane's achievements over the past 12 months have been recognised by the Confederation of African Football, who named the Liverpool forward as the 2019 African Footballer of the Year at a star-studded gala in Egypt.

Mane is the first Senegalese to win the award since another Liverpool player, El Hadji Diouf, in 2002, having twice been runner-up to his Liverpool team-mate Mohamed Salah, in 2017 and 2018.

Salah and the other short-listed candidate, Riyad Mahrez of Manchester City and Algeria, did not attend the ceremony in Hurghada.

> "It is not the only wrong decision I have made, but this one I could correct some years later"
> **Jurgen Klopp on not signing Mane when at Dortmund**

The award was in recognition of the 27-year-old's impressive achievements last year. He was runner-up at the Africa Cup of Nations with Senegal, a European champion with Liverpool, the joint-top scorer in the Premier League, and a winner of the European Super Cup and Club World Cup. Mane eclipsed previous African player of the year Salah for Liverpool as they stayed on course for their first league title for three decades.

Though a runner-up to Algeria at the Cup of Nations, Mane's role as an African winner of the Champions League – following in the footsteps of Didier Drogba (Chelsea 2012) and Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona 2006) – was a key factor in being voted the continent's number one player, as was Liverpool's popularity across the region. The award is organised by CAF and voted for by Africa's national coaches and team captains.

Mane is one of a number of players to emerge from Austrian champions Red Bull Salzburg in recent years.

Erling Haaland, signed by Borussia Dortmund in the January window, could be the best yet, while others include Mane's Liverpool team-mate Naby Keita, Valon Berisha (Lazio), Kevin Kampl (RB Leipzig) and Munas Dabbur (who is joining Hoffenheim from Sevilla).

Liverpool also returned to Salzburg in the January transfer window, signing Japanese winger Takumi Minamino for a modest fee of £9million.

Mane, having been spotted at Metz in France, was prolific during his time in Austria. He scored 19 and 23 times in his two full seasons at Salzburg before earning a move to the Premier League with Southampton.

Ironically, Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp rejected the chance to sign Mane for Borussia Dortmund in 2014. "It was simply a wrong evaluation," Klopp now says. "I thought at that time that it was a lot of pressure on Dortmund – and this transfer, it had to be right.

"It is not the only wrong decision I have made, but this one I could correct some years later."

Fortunately for Klopp he has been teamed up with Mane on Merseyside thanks to a club scouting and transfer policy that has secured some impressive deals in recent times. And Klopp believes the sky's the limit for Mane.

"Sadio is in incredible shape," he adds. "Since his first day he was an incredibly important player. I remember his goal against Arsenal, running down the line, cutting inside and then, with the next step, with the left foot in the far corner.

"That was an incredible goal and I can still remember that with all the other goals he scored. Each year he has made big steps and he is on a good way."

John Holmesdale

Club and country...posing a goal threat for both Liverpool (left) and Senegal (above)

Juan Roman Riquelme

Boca hero returns to the Bombonera

Return...in the midst of things at Boca

The popular youth tournament La Copinha is held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, every year, but this January the competition stood out for one curiosity. Among the players from Cruzeiro, Fortaleza, Vasco da Gama and other clubs were 11 young men named after one of South American football's legends. But what was curious was that the legend in question was not Brazilian, he was Argentinian. And his name was Riquelme.

Official statistics show that over 15,000 Riquelmes, with many creative spelling variations, have been born in Brazil since Juan Roman Riquelme's playing career took off. But although he is admired across South America and the world, it is at Boca Juniors where he is most revered.

He retired in 2015 but helped sway the presidential elections at Boca in December in favour of Jorge Ameal, and as a result the former playmaker is now back at the club as vice-president and director of football. "We want the supporters to be proud of this club," said Riquelme on the campaign trail.

From afar this is, perhaps, a strange comment as Boca have won three of the last five Argentinian league titles. But they have also lost a Copa Libertadores Final and semi-final to River Plate in the last two years, and for many supporters that is simply unacceptable.

While renovation work on the Bombonera remains under debate, Riquelme is seen as the spiritual leader of the new Boca as the club undergoes structural and cosmetic changes. When he originally joined as a youngster from Argentinos Juniors in 1975 the deal involved several youth-team players at a time when Boca did not have quality coming through the ranks.

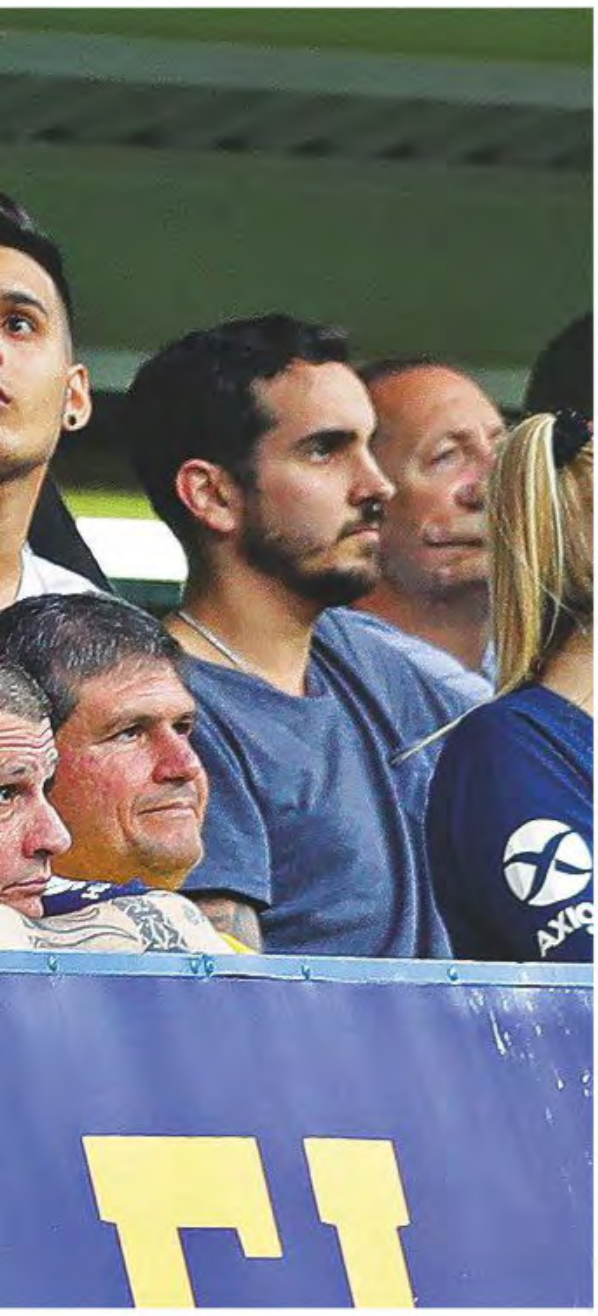
> "The club sold players for $55million but we have just five million in the bank" **Boca president Jorge Ameal**

The new director of football must have observed a similar problem and fired all the coaches at youth level.

As for the first team, the last man to guide Boca to the Libertadores title, in 2007, Miguel Angel Russo returns as coach following spells in Colombia, Peru and Paraguay. But the 63-year-old, who has also battled cancer, will have few resources available in this latest challenge as Boca face financial limitations. According to Ameal: "The club sold players for $55million but we have just five million in the bank."

Meanwhile, Daniele De Rossi has left, citing personal circumstances as the reason for returning to Italy, Carlos Tevez' future is in the balance and an attempt to sign Peruvian striker Paolo Guerrero fell through.

With Argentina attempting to stave off



another debt crisis, all the country's clubs are trying to navigate the country's frail economy. And with strict limits on the purchase of foreign currency, few are buying. Of the recent deals, River Plate sold Exequiel Palacios to Bayer Leverkusen for €22m in the biggest sale of the summer, while Velez Sarsfield brought in winger Ricardo Centurion but implemented a "domestic violence" clause in his contract after his former partner accused him of beating her in 2017.

Over in La Plata, the Diego Maradona saga continues, with daily updates on whether he will stay at Gimnasia as they battle relegation. What he will welcome is the news that Independiente may rename their stadium after Ricardo Bochini, who Maradona idolised as a youngster.

Although Argentina produces few players in the mould of the classic playmaker these days, the fascination with the likes of Bochini and Riquelme remains intact.

Joel Richards

Abderrazak Hamdallah

Moroccan striker was world's top scorer in 2019

Who was the world's leading scorer in club football in 2019? Not Lionel Messi (54 for Barcelona), or Robert Lewandowski (50 for Bayern Munich), or Kylian Mbappe of Paris Saint-Germain. Instead, it was Morocco's Abderrazak Hamdallah, who recorded 57 goals for Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr.

Aside from a season at Norway's Aalesund, who signed him in 2013 from his hometown club Olympic Safi, the 29-year-old Moroccan has pursued a nomadic career outside of Europe.

His 19 goals in 30 games for Aalesund earned a move to China, where he started well enough for Guangzhou R&F before injuries and a falling-out with coach Cosmin Contra led to his departure after 18 months, to Qatari side El Jaish.

In five years in the Middle East – first at El Jaish, then another Qatari club Al Rayyan, and now Al Nassr – Hamdallah has maintained a spectacular goal-a-game scoring rate.

At Al Nassr he finished the 2018-19 season as the Saudi league's top scorer with 34, helping the club to their first league title since 2015 and claiming the award as the league's best player.

After making his senior debut for Morocco in 2013 he drifted out of international contention before his scoring feats for Al Nassr earned a recall by then national coach Herve Renard ahead of last summer's Africa Cup of Nations – only for the player to walk out of a pre-tournament training camp.

Officially, his departure was put down to an injury but it later emerged he had clashed with team-mate Faycal Fajr during a friendly against Gambia. Fajr had grabbed the ball from Hamdallah's arms in order to take a penalty and, privately, Hamdallah complained of Europe-based cliques within the squad.

Hamdallah has done little to change perceptions of him as an outsider. He had rejected Renard's initial invitation to play with Morocco in March last year, citing personal family reasons, then in November he announced his international retirement after turning down an invitation from Renard's successor, Vahid Halilhodzic, who says: "He is a player with a lot of great potential, but he also has many flaws."

Whether those flaws will prevent a European club from taking a chance on him remains to be seen. Sources at Al Nassr insisted he has a €20million release clause in his contract. At the age of 29, it may be too late to compete in Europe with the likes of Messi, Lewandowski and Mbappe.

John Holmesdale

Prolific...yet another goal for Al Nassr

Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Questions raised over Swede's move back to Milan

Threat...causing problems for Milan against Sampdoria

Controversy is never far away where Zlatan Ibrahimovic is concerned, and it is a measure of the size of his ego that, even at 38, he still believes he has something to offer Italian football, and in particular Milan.

The Swede re-joined Milan in January on a six-month deal, having been a free agent since leaving LA Galaxy after the MLS play-offs.

Ibrahimovic had announced his intention to leave Los Angeles in suitably dramatic style with a social media post that read: "I came, I saw, I conquered. Thank you LA Galaxy, making me feel alive again. To the Galaxy fans – you wanted Zlatan, I gave you Zlatan. You are welcome. The story continues...now go back to watch baseball."

He scored 52 goals in 56 games in two seasons for Galaxy, but his final game ended in defeat to city rivals Los Angeles FC in the play-off semi-finals, where he was overshadowed by LAFC's Carlos Vela, who was named the league's Most Valuable Player.

Pledge...he has bought into Hammarby

Whether Ibrahimovic can now make a significant contribution at Milan remains to be seen. They are currently a shadow of the side that he left in 2012, after winning the title in 2011 and finishing the following season as Serie A's top scorer.

Milan went into the Italian winter break this term in 12th place with new coach Stefano Pioli struggling to breathe life into the side since his appointment in October. Ibrahimovic made his debut as a substitute in a disappointing 0-0 draw at home to Sampdoria.

The early signs are that Ibrahimovic will struggle to live up to his promise, but his career record remains outstanding, having won an incredible 13 league titles over 15 seasons in Holland (with Ajax), Italy (Juventus, Internazionale and Milan), Spain (Barcelona) and France (Paris Saint-Germain). The Champions League has remained elusive but he did win the 2017 Europa League with Manchester United, although a serious injury ruled him out of the Final against his former club Ajax and also curtailed his second season at Old Trafford.

A move back to Sweden seemed a strong possibility after he purchased a stake in Stockholm club Hammarby, but he remains a controversial figure in the country of his birth, where a statue of him outside Malmo's stadium has been vandalised on a number of occasions, with the latest attack resulting in the sculpture being sawn at the ankles.

Although Ibrahimovic began his career with Malmo he has irritated his former club's fans with his ambition to make rivals Hammarby "the biggest in Scandinavia".

Meanwhile, Ibrahimovic was by no means the only veteran on the move early in the January window.

Former Werder Bremen and Chelsea starlet Marko Marin left Belgrade's Red Star for Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, while ex-Croatia striker Mario Mandzukic moved from Juventus to Qatari side Al Duhail.

John Holmesdale

> Ibrahimovic began his career with Malmo, but he has irritated his former club's fans with his ambition to make rivals Hammarby "the biggest in Scandinavia"

Protest...Malmo supporters have made their feelings known by vandalising a statue of their former player outside the Eleda Stadion

Roy Chipolina

The captain of Gibraltar eyes another qualifying campaign

At the age of 37, and after a qualifying campaign that saw Gibraltar finish bottom of their Euro 2020 group, you might expect captain Roy Chipolina to be calling it quits.

"No way," says the customs officer who was born in England but has spent most of his life on the Rock.

"I want to keep going as long as I can; as long as they will have me in the team. I still get an immense amount of joy and pleasure out of it."

Chipolina is one of a trio of players from Gibraltar's first competitive game – against Poland at the start of Euro 2016 qualifying – who is still in the team. Fast approaching 50 caps, he adds: "I went from being a Sunday league footballer to international overnight, exposed to some amazing experiences and opportunities."

It is not a ride he wants to get off in a hurry, particularly as Gibraltar are looking increasingly to punch above their weight.

> "We don't go into a match anticipating getting thrashed. Of course we are realistic, but we try very hard to work on our concentration and not to make mistakes"

"There are some interesting youngsters coming through the ranks and one or two players now getting a chance to play professionally," explains Chipolina.

Teenagers Louie Annesley at Blackburn Rovers and Tjay De Barr, who this season joined Real Oviedo in neighbouring Spain, represent the team's future aspirations.

But the biggest progress, according to the skipper, has been the appointment of Uruguayan coach Julio Cesar Ribas and the sense of professionalism that he has brought to a difficult, if not thankless, task.

"We've always had a family atmosphere around the team," says Chipolina, which is not surprising in a territory where most are related in some way or the other. "But we've more purpose now and a lot more discipline to the way we approach the game."

Ribas made quick progress after his arrival with two wins in the Nations League in 2018, although Chipolina admits: "It was perhaps disappointing we didn't kick on in the Euro 2020 qualifying, but we were in a really tough group and the quality of opposition was massively tough."

Gibraltar still have to deal with those who question the point of their participation in European Championship or World Cup qualifiers as their entire population of 35,000 would not even fill a major European club ground.

"We still get that a lot, but you can also ask what's the point of clubs participating in the Premier League or La Liga when it is the same old clubs who effectively compete for the title every year," argues Chipolina. "People might also ask what is the value of a match where you lose by seven or eight goals, but then Manchester City beat Watford by a similar score this season and so did Leicester against Southampton and they are not questioned.

"We don't go into a match anticipating getting thrashed.

"Of course we are realistic, but we try very hard to work on our concentration and not to make mistakes. That's one thing I've learnt at this level: every little

Leading by example ...Gibraltar's skipper

error you make is punished."

But then come those moments that make it all worthwhile...

Chipolina was in the line-up for Lincoln Red Imps when they beat Celtic at home in the preliminary round of the Champions League in 2016 and for the national team two years later in Armenia, where a 1-0 win ensured their first – and to date only – away victory in a competitive international.

Chipolina says of that game: "By far the best day for our football, against a team that included Henrikh Mkhitaryan."

Mark Gleeson

Li Tie

Ex-Everton star succeeds Lippi as China coach

The appointment of Li Tie as China's coach marks a major change in direction for the national side. His appointment follows Marcello Lippi's period in charge, which ended at the end of last year when a World Cup qualifying loss to Syria placed China's chances of reaching the 2022 finals in serious doubt.

A 2-1 defeat in Dubai left China in second place in Group A in the second phase of Asia's qualifying campaign. Only the winners of each of the eight groups is guaranteed to advance to the next round, with slots also being allocated to the four best runners-up. China are eight points behind Syria, having played one game less before facing Maldives in late March in what will be Li's first competitive game in charge.

"In the process of recruiting, the first and most important thing is that we want to find people who want to play soccer for our nation, who have the spirit of selfless dedication, who want to sacrifice everything for the national team," Li said at his official unveiling. "Second, we want to find players who can shoulder the pressure of the national team."

Lippi originally quit in January 2019 after a quarter-final exit at the Asian Cup, but was reappointed in May. "I was well paid and I take full responsibility," the Italian said after the Syria defeat.

Ex-Italy captain Fabio Cannavaro took over from Lippi but lasted just two games.

The Chinese Football Association (CFA) said it had "accepted" Lippi's latest resignation, adding: "We are really sorry that the unsatisfactory match results disappoint all Chinese fans.

"The CFA will reflect seriously to rebuild the team and try our best in the following World Cup qualifiers."

Long-term development is the goal for Li and the federation, which recently announced changes to the regulations surrounding foreign players in the Chinese Super League. Plans are also ongoing to naturalise further foreigners following September's debut of Brazil-born Elkeson, who became the first non-Chinese player to be capped.

China retains a long-standing ambition to host the World Cup and the 2030 finals remain a possibility, while 2034 would give the country a chance to build an entire new generation of players.

Li's time at Everton was restricted by injuries but he remains one of China's most respected players, having represented his country 92 times and played at the 2002 World Cup finals, before moving into a coaching role.

He served as assistant to Lippi both during his time with the national team and at Chinese Super League side Guangzhou Evergrande.

Most recently, Li guided Wuhan Zall to promotion to the Chinese top flight.

"I have learnt a lot from him," Li says of Lippi. "I think one of the important points is his yearning to win, which is beyond that of many other coaches which I have experienced."

John Holmesdale

Goal...Li Tie

18+

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Power Serge

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

After an uncertain, injury-hit start at Arsenal, the livewire forward is thriving in Munich and will be a key man for Germany at the Euros

As Germany prepare to do battle with France and Portugal in their Euro 2020 "Group of Death", *Bundestrainer* Joachim Low will have one overriding wish this year: that front-running virtuoso Serge Gnabry suffers no further injuries after an Achilles problem just before Christmas.

Over the last 12 months or so, the 24-year-old Bayern Munich forward has morphed into a *Nationalmannschaft* talisman, not only emerging as the team's top scorer in the European Championship qualifiers with eight goals but also supplying much of the team's attacking explosiveness and craft.

While the Stuttgart-born star normally operates on the right wing for Bayern, Low likes to unleash him in several different ways in national team colours – sometimes out wide, on other occasions as a second striker or as leader of the line. In a German side in transition following the debacle of Russia 2018 he is now a gold-plated reference point; both game-changer and tone-setter.

The son of an Ivorian father and German mother, Gnabry is the complete weapons-grade package. Short, squat and powerful, he can leave defenders for dead with his pace and tricks. He has two good feet, is sharp and clever on the counter-attack, and boasts a fine football brain. Often

London calling...on target against Spurs

the quickest players have the worst on-field instincts, but he stands for the best of both worlds.

He is a natural finisher, too. One only has to look at his recent highlights reel: a four-goal blitz in Bayern's 7-2 Champions League win away at Tottenham Hotspur in October; his hat-trick as Germany crushed Northern Ireland 6-1 in a Euro 2020 qualifier; and his magnificent solo strike in the 3-2 victory in Holland in the same elimination group, cutting in from the left, turning centre-back Virgil Van Dijk inside out and firing a right-foot effort into the top corner.

Just 13 games into his international career he averages a goal a game. And of all the great German strikers, only Gottfried Fuchs, Gerd Muller and Klaus Fischer had more goals after 13 caps. By way of comparison, Germany's all-time leading marksman Miroslav Klose had "only" managed 11 at the same point.

Nor does Gnabry often miss the target in club football. In his 18 months at Bayern he had racked up 24 goals in 64 competitive games by the start of 2020 and become one of only three Bundesliga players to hit double figures for three German top-flight clubs – with Werder Bremen, Hoffenheim and Bayern – in consecutive seasons.

From top to bottom he is a Team DFB prize asset. And Low makes no bones about it. "If he's fit, he must play," declared the national-team coach at a press conference in Estonia last autumn.

"Gnabry has all the ingredients to play at the highest level. He's strong on the ball, he's dangerous in and around the front of goal and I like the way he moves into space. I wanted to include him in my squad for the 2014 World Cup. Unfortunately he was injured."

> "If he's fit, he must play. Gnabry has all the ingredients to play at the highest level"
>
> **Germany coach Joachim Low**

Early in 2014 there was much talk of Gnabry, who at the time was in his third season of a five-year stint with Arsenal, being on the plane for Russia, with Gunners manager Arsene Wenger backing the youngster to be part of Low's plans. Arsenal's German internationals Per Mertesacker and Mesut Ozil were said to be raving about the youngster's express-train pace and Germany's assistant coach Hansi Flick also publicly admitted that Gnabry was in contention.

Low, a coach renowned for pulling last-minute selection rabbits out of the hat, was clearly ready to give Gnabry a shot. He always has had a soft spot for speed merchants and was ready, willing and able to throw the kid in at the deep end. It made no difference to Low that Gnabry was an Arsenal first-team novice with just a handful of Premier League starts under his belt. The *Bundestrainer* was itching to roll the dice.

Tragically for the teenager, two months before the start of the World Cup, he was forced to the sidelines by an inflamed knee and for six months the condition kept him confined to the stands.

Effectively, this was the beginning of the end for him at Arsenal. In the 2014-15 season he did not feature at all in the first-team and after moving on loan to West Bromwich Albion, in August 2015, he spent six months on the sidelines, only getting onto the field of play for a laughable 137 minutes.

West Brom's manager at the time, Tony Pulis – a conservative football thinker if ever there was one – viewed the young loanee as a wasted transaction; neither fit nor experienced

Loan...a move to West Brom didn't work out

Frustration...game time at Arsenal was severely limited

Debut...playing against San Marino

enough for a relegation dogfight.

By the summer of 2016, shortly after starring for Germany at the Olympic Games, Gnabry decided to call time on his English adventure and insisted on leaving North London to join northern German side Werder Bremen in a £4.25million deal.

He had undoubtedly made a great deal of progress at Arsenal, successfully making the transition from the under-18 side to the first-team fringes while receiving a thorough grounding in top-quality attacking football. But the bottom line was he was desperately short of game minutes. Now 21, something had to give. Why stick with the status quo when West Brom labelled him a dud and Wenger had only given him nine starts?

Many Arsenal fans thought the player should have shown more patience and loyalty. However, they were not down and out on the squad depth chart, sat behind such as Alexis Sanchez, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Alex Iwobi, Santi Cazorla and Danny Welbeck. Whatever Wenger's misgivings, the break had to be made.

Former Bayern and Germany midfielder turned TV pundit Dietmar Hamann is convinced Gnabry made the right decision in quitting the Premier League, explaining: "In England, young players are always being loaned out. Twenty-five guys make it onto a squad and the rest are left to their own devices. They have to take their chances. You have to remember that, in 2015, West Bromwich coach Tony Pulis said that Gnabry was not good enough for his club.

"For me, Gnabry now rates among the five best wingers in the world. His story is proof of his unbelievably strong character.

"As well as being a tremendously gifted footballer, he has an indomitable spirit. Nothing ventured, nothing gained is his motto. Hats off to him. In life, you must never give up. There's always another day. Gnabry has shown that. "

Returning to Germany in 2016 to play for Bremen was the best possible outcome for the youngster, a case of a step back prior to the great leap forward. Bremen were only a mid-ranking Bundesliga side, but what mattered most was his vastly increased workload. At Bremen he played every week, going on to score 11 goals in 27 Bundesliga games and thrilling the Weserstadion faithful with his sizzling sprints, energy and moments of sublime wizadry.

While at Werder he won his first cap for Germany, marking the occasion with a hat-trick in the 8-0 hammering of San Marino. The last instance of a German international scoring three times on their debut was Cologne's Dieter Muller, who managed a treble in the 4-2 win against Yugoslavia in the 1976 Euro semi-finals.

Over and above his goals against San Marino, Gnabry was the most impressive player on the pitch that night, dribbling past defenders at will and continually making great off the ball runs. "The *Bundestrainer* wanted me to play with freshness," he said after the game. "I think I was successful in that."

Always alert to the best talent in the country, Bayern came calling for him in

the summer of 2017, only having to stump up €8m to trigger a release clause. Bayern, who regarded him as a replacement for ageing Dutch winger Arjen Robben, did not need him immediately though and sent him on a 12-month secondment to Hoffenheim, where he would again post great numbers, with 10 goals and as many assists in 22 Bundesliga outings.

Especially influential for Hoffenheim in the second-half of the season, Gnabry played a key role in the south-westerners' excellent third-place finish in the Bundesliga, a classification worthy of the club's first-ever Champions League ticket. For a period, the *Hoffenheimer* board thought that they might be able to persuade Bayern to extend the loan deal but, somewhat inevitably, a big fat "*nein*" was the response. At least he had bequeathed a tangible legacy.

Prior to definitively joining Bayern at the start of last season, Gnabry was the archetypal injury-prone professional. At Arsenal, Bremen and Hoffenheim he was the poster boy for knocks which could not be run off, for all varieties of muscular and articulation. Name any part of the body and he used to be a martyr to it: chronic knee trouble, a trapped nerve in his back, thigh strains, a damaged groin...

Without the malfunctioning knee he suffered at Arsenal he might have been a world champion with Germany in 2014 and he also had to forgo the 2018 edition of the same competition, scratched from the selection stakes by a nasty springtime adductor tear.

Impressive...at Werder Bremen

In an interview with *Kicker* magazine in mid-April 2018, up-and coming Hoffenheim coach Julian Nagelsmann, who is now in charge of RB Leipzig, offered an interesting insider's view of Gnabry's "China Doll" tendencies.

"Unfortunately, he did not play a lot for us up until Christmas," said Nagelsmann. "We had to get to grips with this problem after the winter break. As a youngster, he had a relatively high number of injuries.

"During the week at Arsenal his mindset was to hold back a little [in training], even when physically he was in a position to give it his all. To our eyes, that wasn't the right approach.

"You can only come up to scratch on a matchday if you've gone all out in training in the preceding days.

"You can't cut corners and say that all will be well at the weekend. That's how injuries happen, when you have not prepared as intensively as you should.

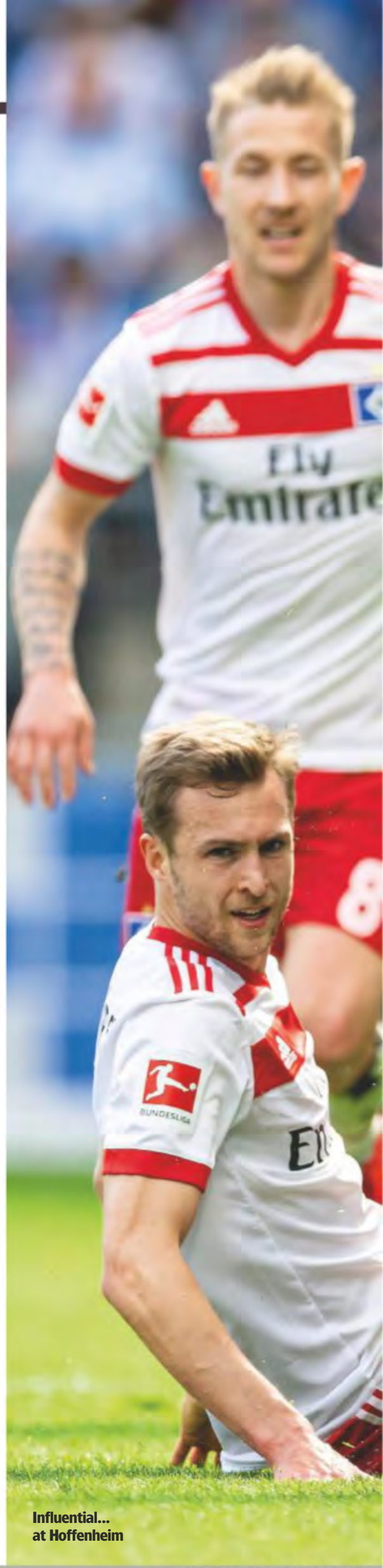
"We've found a good method to keep him injury free in the second half of the season. This has played a big part in his development."

Sadly Nagelmann had spoken too soon. Just a fortnight later, Gnabry was en route to the infirmary once again seriously, hobbling off against Hanover with heavily bandaged thigh. The result of a scan was a badly damaged adductor and his Russia 2018 dream was over.

Incidentally, Nagelsmann was not the

> "You can only come up to scratch on a matchday if you've gone all out in training in the preceding day"
>
> **Julian Nagelsmann**

Advice...with Julian Nagelsmann



Influential... at Hoffenheim

Timeline

SEP 26, 2012
Makes his first-team debut for Arsenal, coming on as a sub in a 6-1 League Cup win against Coventry City.

OCT 20, 2012
Plays in the Premier League for the first time, as a sub, as Arsenal lose 1-0 at Norwich City.

OCT 24, 2012
Appears as a sub for a first Champions League appearance as Arsenal lose 2-0 at home to Schalke.

SEP 22, 2013
Starts a Premier League game for the first time as Arsenal beat Stoke City 3-1.

SEP 28, 2013
Scores his first goal for Arsenal, in a 2-1 win at Swansea City that puts his side top of the Premier League.

first coach to point the finger at Gnabry for not always paying attention to his fitness as his Germany under-17 boss, Stefan Boger, had once made a similar critique of the youngster.

It says much for the competence of Bayern's strength-and-conditioning staff that Gnabry had until recently been injury free in his first 18 months at the Allianz-Arena. Hence his core role in the side's attacking potency, contributing 24 goals and 17 assists. However, the Achilles-tendon injury sustained during Bayern's winter-break training camp in Doha is a sign that no one can rest on their laurels.

Although he is plainly box office these days, certain figures in the Bayern hierarchy seemed more than a little surprised to see him settle in so quickly.

Injured... against Hanover

"When he returned to us after his spell at Hoffenheim we thought we'd take a look at him and see whether we'd play him," former club president Uli Hoeness explained to *Kicker* last April. "Now he's a regular starter, is having a lot of fun and is the biggest revelation of the season."

Every time Gnabry plays for Bayern he looks totally energised by the challenge and responsibility. He clearly loves operating in the rarified air at the top of the mountain.

Yet do not make the mistake of thinking that Bayern are the ones who have moulded him into a world-beater. Much of that credit must go to former coach Nagelsmann, who improved his

AUG 7, 2015
Joins West Bromwich Albion on a season-long loan – but is recalled in January after a lack of first-team action.

AUG 20, 2016
Wins a silver medal as Germany lose to Brazil on penalties in the Olympic Final in Rio.

AUG 31, 2016
Signs for Werder Bremen.

SEP 17, 2016
Scores his first goal in German football as Bremen lose 4-1 at Borussia Monchengladbach.

game across the board, making him more appreciative of time and space, encouraging him to get into the box as much as possible and generally rendering him more mobile, not tied down to one wide station.

Nagelsmann also succeeded in lighting a motivational fire beneath Gnabry.

For all his great talent – maybe even because of it – the youngster could be lethargic at times, often leaving his Hoffenheim coach with no option other than to "give him a kick up the backside". As a result, the German international is far less likely to go through the motions these days. He now is a 90 minute "trier", ever ready to go through the pain barrier.

If ever there was a watershed moment in Gnabry's career it has to be his show-stopping turn for Germany at the 2016 Olympics in Brazil, where he ended up as the tournament's joint-top scorer with six goals – along with team-mate Nils Pietersen – and picked up a silver medal.

Logically, he should not have come close to that Olympiad. He had just been through a nightmare loan spell at West Bromwich Albion and was terribly short of match practice, having made only two first-team starts in the entire 2015-16 campaign – and even those were just a couple of League Cup run-outs with Arsenal. Indeed, prior to the Rio Olympics, he had gone 11 months without competitive action.

Arguably the only man who truly believed in him at the time was German boss Horst Hrubesch. He had worked with him at under-21 level – notably picking him for the 2015 European Championships – and was certain that Gnabry's pace, eye for goal and wounded pride would render him an extremely dangerous customer at the Olympics. And how right that assessment turned out to be.

Medallist...taking on Brazil in the Final of the Olympic Games

"At the Games in Brazil he showed exactly what he is capable of when he is healthy, fit and in a match rhythm," says Hrubesch. "He has to play. In Brazil, he displayed all his qualities.

"It frustrates me that no one has ever shown any faith in him up to now."

Gnabry's career can be separated into two distinct periods: pre-the Brazil Olympics, when he was searching for his path, and then starting to fulfil his potential after the Olympiad.

Renowned from the earliest of ages for his rare footballing ability, for his speed off the mark and prodigious dribbling, he played as a kid for south-western clubs Weissach, Ditzingen, Hemmingen, Feuerbach and Stuttgarter Kickers. He was only 10 when Bayern offered him an academy place. Yet, much to his dismay, his father, Jean-Hermann refused to play ball and was adamant that he wanted to carry on coaching his son himself.

"Oh boy was I angry," recalled Gnabry in an interview with Bayern's club magazine. "I was completely ready to go there. I cried. My dad wouldn't budge."

Two years later, the youngster would join VfB Stuttgart, and while there he rose through the ranks alongside an adolescent by the name of Joshua Kimmich who, like his best friend Gnabry, would go on to shine for both Bayern and Germany.

Footage exists of the pair playing for VfB in the Knabenturnier, a prestigious national five-a-side tournament for under-13s. It was a taste of a world to come, with Kimmich, defending and regulating to the rear, Gnabry running amok and scoring goals. Needless to say, Stuttgart won the competition.

For over a half-century, the Knabenturnier has been a showcase

Champion...celebrating Bayern Munich's Bundesliga success last year

> "At the Games in Brazil he showed exactly what he is capable of when he is healthy, fit and in a match rhythm"
> **Horst Hrubesch**

NOV 11, 2016
Gets a hat-trick on his debut for the senior national side as Germany win 8-0 away to San Marino.

JUN 11, 2017
Signs a three-year deal with Bayern Munich and joins Hoffenheim on a season-long loan three days later.

JUN 30, 2017
In the Germany side that beats Spain 1-0 in the Euro Under-21 Final.

SEP 1, 2018
Makes his Bundesliga debut for Bayern Munich in a 3-0 win at Stuttgart as a 77th-minute sub.

NOV 3, 2018
Gets his first Bundesliga goal for Bayern in a 1–1 draw with Freiburg.

OCT 1, 2019
Scores four goals in Bayern's 7-2 win away to Tottenham Hotspur in the Champions League.

for future German stars, including Gnabry, Kimmich, Thomas Muller, Manuel Neuer, Toni Kroos, Michael Ballack and Mats Hummels.

"In our year group, Serge was always the best player," says Kimmich, now one of the best right-backs or controlling midfielders in Europe. "I've rarely seen a player who is so single-minded when going for goal. We're different in some ways, but the most important thing is that we laugh together and know we can rely on one another. Even when things aren't going right"

Their partnership would temporarily be broken in 2011 when the 15-year-old Serge quit VfB for Arsenal. Some might say, Gnabry was a touch too quick to fly the nest, but he insists it was too good an opportunity to turn down.

"Who knows where I would be now if I'd stayed with VfB," he told the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* newspaper last year. "It was not an easy decision. I did have a few concerns, but on the whole I'm someone who likes to take risks."

It might not have worked out for him at Arsenal, but what matters is where he sits now and that is on the top table. Champions have no use for regrets. WS

Pals...with club and country team-mate Joshua Kimmich

Serge Gnabry

the numbers game

GERMANY

13

CAPS

13

GOALS

TRANSFER FEES

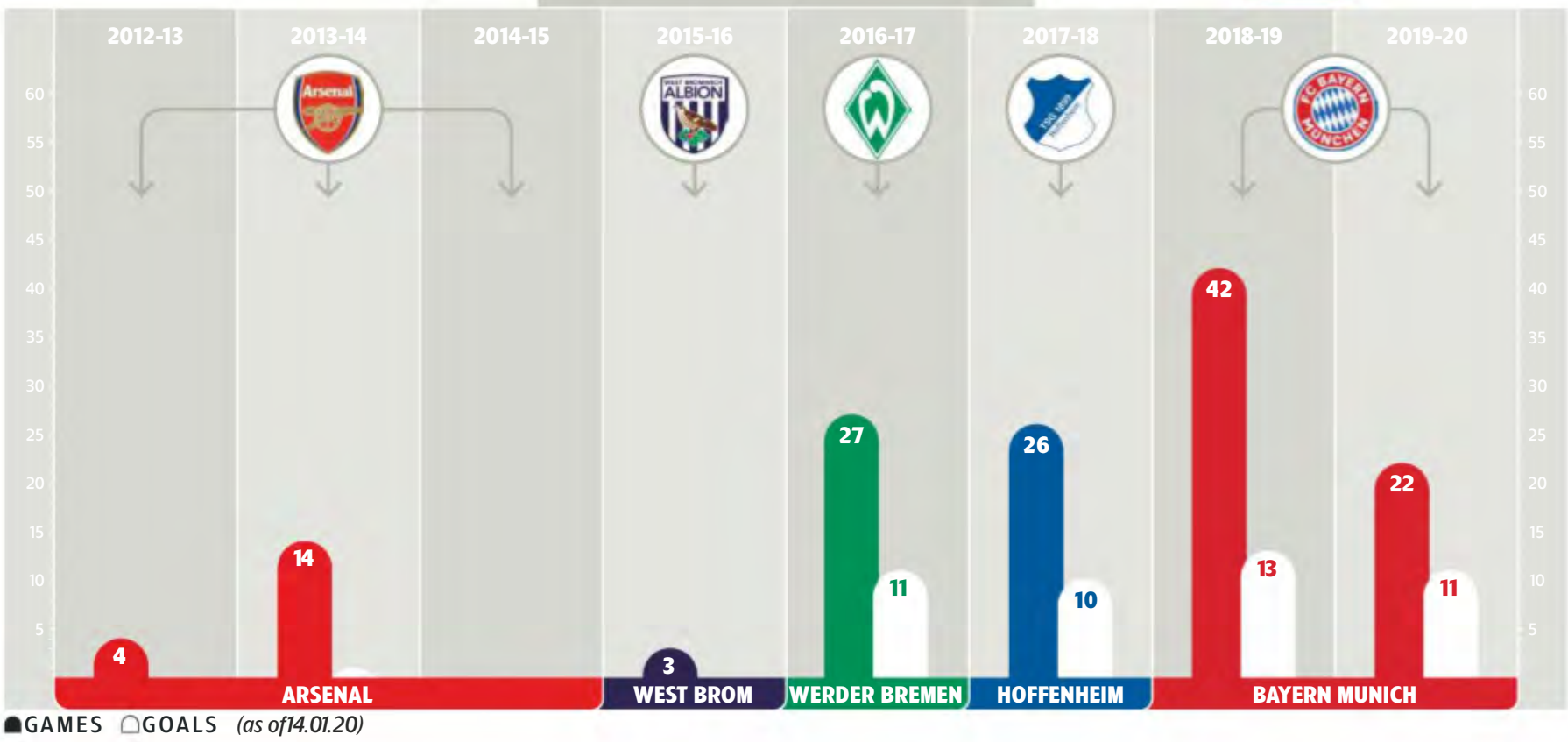
free	€5m	€8m
STUTTGART TO ARSENAL (2011)	ARSENAL TO WERDER BREMEN (2016)	WERDER BREMEN TO BAYERN MUNICH (2017)

ARSENAL'S YOUNGEST PREMIER LEAGUE PLAYERS

	Years/Days
2008 JACK WILSHERE	16/256
2012 SERGE GNABRY	17/98
2004 CESC FABREGAS	17/103
2014 AINSLEY MAITLAND-NILES	17/105

HONOURS

- 2019 Bundesliga
- 2019 DFB Pokal
- 2017 Euro Under-21s



GAMES GOALS *(as of 14.01.20)*

Question time

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

CAN THEY BREAK THEIR ROUND-OF-16 HOODOO?

Of all the club authority figures involved in the knockout stage of the Champions League, no one needs a deep run in the competition more than PSG president Nasser Al Khelaifi. Since the Qatari state took over the French side in 2011 and began spending petrodollars galore on top talent – some €1.25billion to date – the Parisians have become a byword for elite European underachievement, never going beyond the quarter-finals stage.

PSG, who have gone out in the round of 16 in each of the past three seasons, have turned continental self-destruction into an art form.

In the spring of 2017 they could not even make it over the finish line despite a 4-0 first-leg victory against Barcelona, collapsing 6-1 in the return. And it was the same story a year ago, winning 2-0 at Manchester United, only to blow it in the second-leg with a 3-1 home defeat and an away-goals exit.

The unexpected loss to a hardly inspiring United side was a bitter pill for all to swallow at the Parc des Princes, but particularly for Khelaifi, whose grand empire-building plans have thus far come to nothing.

Mindset...Leonardo (below left) and Nasser Al Khelaifi

At the end of last season he took aim at his squad in a splenetic interview with *France Football* magazine, claiming: "The outcome of the Manchester United tie revealed our shortcomings in the engagement, motivation and mentality of our players.

"We all have dreams, notably to one day to win the Champions League. However, we have to give ourselves the means to do it and show the proper desire.

"Against Manchester United, I was convinced that it wasn't us who wanted qualification most. Were we particularly ready mentally? I have my doubts.

"There's a special mentality you need to have at the top European level and we don't sufficiently have it. You have to approach every game with the same force. We're not always consistent in our desire. That has to change.

"I want to see fighting spirit in every game. The players are going to have to assume their responsibilities. They will have to do more, work harder. I want players who are proud to wear our shirt, not those who do the job when it suits them. They are not here to please themselves.

"If they are not happy, the door's open. I no longer want to see star behaviour."

To help bring about this change in the dressing-room mindset, Khelaifi reappointed former Brazil international Leonardo as sporting director in the summer. Leonardo worked in a similar role for PSG from 2011 to 2013 and prior to his controversial departure – after barging into a referee during a post-match altercation he was handed a

> **"I want players who are proud to wear our shirt, not those who do the job when it suits them"**
> PSG president Nasser Al Khelaifi

13-month ban and resigned – he was a popular figure at the club.

On the eve of the Champions League restart, Leonardo's two biggest headaches undoubtedly relate to the futures of attacking superstars Neymar and Kylian Mbappe.

Neymar – who makes no secret of his wish to quit the Ligue 1 champions as soon as possible, preferably to rejoin his old club Barcelona – is hardly committed to the cause, while Mbappe, who is a target for Real Madrid, has to decide whether he wants to put pen to paper on a massive new contract to remain in France. Mbappe says that he does not want to "make waves" at this juncture, but is he stalling?

PSG's German coach Thomas Tuchel is another who could soon be moving on. Rumours abound that he and Leonardo are not exactly working hand-in-hand. And with the Bayern Munich job up for grabs in June, he may be tempted to head back to his homeland.

Nick Bidwell

Where next...Neymar (left) and Mbappe

BORUSSIA DORTMUND

HOW QUICKLY CAN ERLING HAALAND BE INTEGRATED INTO THE TEAM?

How the newly arrived Norwegian striker settles in following his €20million move from Red Bull Salzburg could be vital. The 19-year-old was in sensational form for the Austrian side in the group phase, scoring eight goals in six games, but he is still a little rough around the edges.

Sensational... Erling Haaland

REAL MADRID

CAN ISCO MAINTAIN HIS OUTSTANDING FORM OF LATE?

Not so long ago, after dropping down the pecking order, the Malaga-born playmaker looked destined for the Bernabeu exit. But now, thanks to coach Zinedine Zidane, he is a player reborn. Clever, brilliant and incisive, Real's hopes may rest on him having conquered his inconsistency once and for all.

Reborn ...Isco

ATALANTA

HAVE THE ITALIAN SIDE GONE AS FAR AS THEY CAN?

The first debutants to reach the knockout stage since Leicester City three years ago, the Bergamo outfit could be tempted to say "job done" and risk losing a degree of their competitive intensity. Some would argue that Atalanta are too naive at this level and that they play too open a game.

Debutants ...Atalanta

BAYERN MUNICH

ARE THEY TOO RELIANT ON ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI?

Bayern's hopes of substantial Champions League progress will depend to a large extent on the powers of recovery of their peerless Polish striker.

Having scored an incredible 30 goals for Bayern in the first half of the season, including 10 in the Champions League, the 31-year-old underwent a minor groin operation during the winter break and will be hoping to return as good as new. But momentum can be a delicate business in any sport and any break, intermission or change of circumstance can throw a spanner in the works.

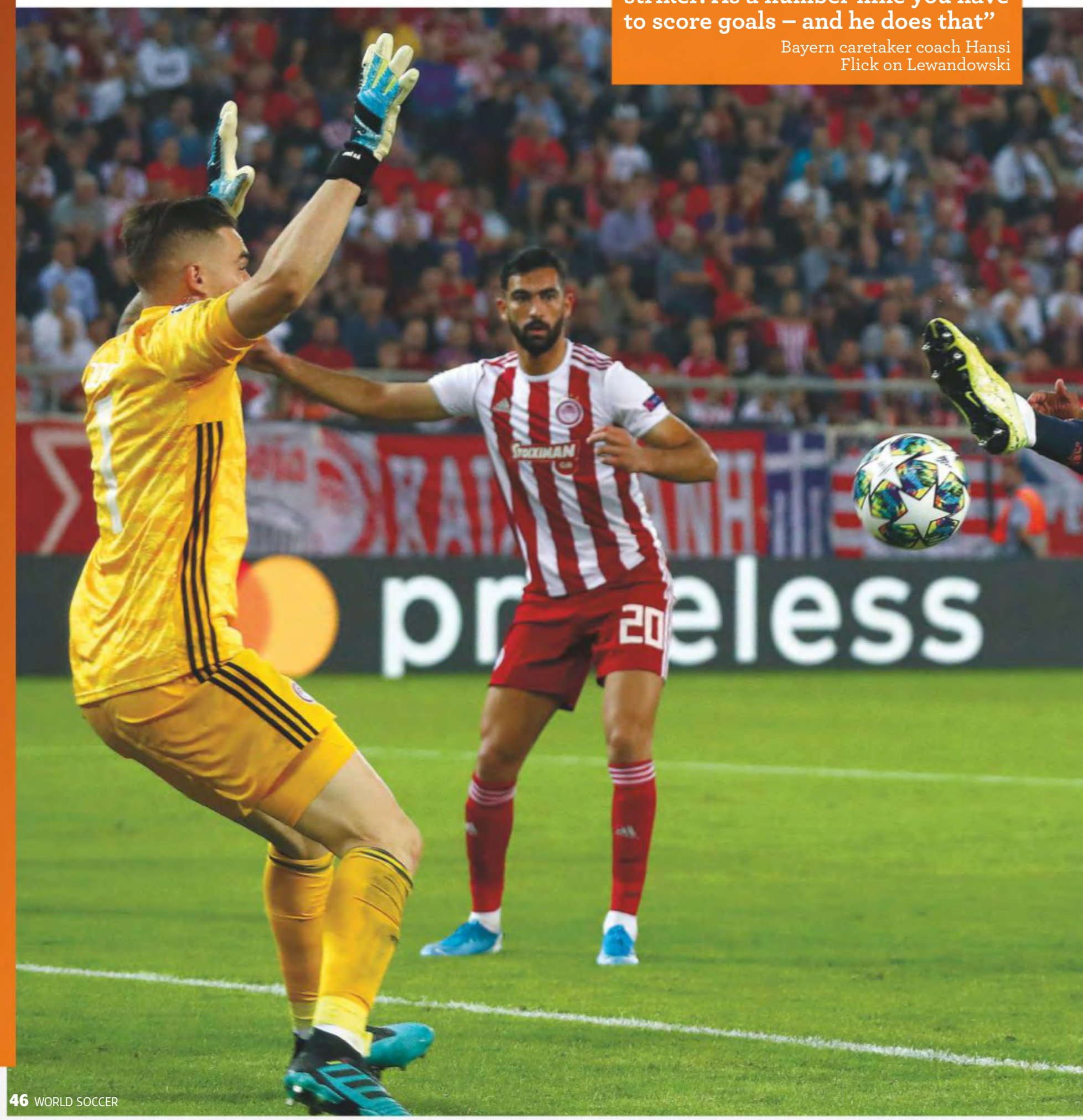
Lewandowski did not travel to Bayern's mid-term training camp in Doha, wisely continuing his rehab in the Bavarian capital, and Bayern are confident he will soon be fit and raring to go. Beset by an abundance of injury woes at present – to defenders Niklas Sule, Lucas Hernandez and Javi Martinez, plus wingers Kingsley Coman and Serge Gnabry – they would truly be in the mire without the focal point of their attack. They simply cannot replace him.

No longer fixated by thoughts of a switch to Real Madrid, the Pole is at the peak of his goalscoring powers, snapping up chances with deadly aplomb and merrily breaking records. The pick of his exploits this term? At least one goal in each of Bayern's first 11 Bundesliga games and the quickest four-goal burst in Champions League history: a 15-minute salvo in November's 6-0 win against Red Star in Belgrade.

He recently became Bayern's leading Champions League marksman with 46 goals and now stands in fifth place in the competition's all-time list with 63.

However, it is fair to say that he has

> **"For me, he is the world's best striker. As a number nine you have to score goals – and he does that"**
>
> Bayern caretaker coach Hansi Flick on Lewandowski



Quick...Robert Lewandowski makes Red Star suffer

not exactly sparkled of late in the knockout phase.

Over the past two seasons he has only managed a couple of goals at this stage, and they were against the relatively unfancied Besiktas of Turkey in 2018. Now's the time for the former Lech Poznan and Borussia Dortmund spearhead to step forward.

Two aspects of his sporting life stand out above all others: the fact that he is equally capable of scoring with his right foot, left foot or head, and the sheer professionalism with which he approaches his craft.

Apart from standard training sessions at Bayern, he puts himself through iron-pumping sessions, uses meditation, cycles and pays great attention to nutrition. His wife Anna, a former Polish karate champion, makes isotonic drinks for him and he also has a novel meal-time regime, starting with dessert as the first course and ending with a salad.

Run...he scored in each of Bayern's opening 11 games in the Bundesliga

"I feel so sharp physically that I intend to carry on playing at the highest level for several years," he reveals – which is good news for Bayern caretaker coach Hansi Flick who says: "For me, he is the world's best striker. As a number nine you have to score goals – and he does that. To make it even better, he leads the team superbly too."

MANCHESTER CITY

IS NOW THE TIME TO BREAK THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE JINX?

City boss Pep Guardiola is under increasing pressure to deliver in the continent's most prestigious competition. Eight seasons have passed since he guided a team to glory – Barcelona in 2011 – which is an extraordinarily barren run for such a visionary tactician.

Visionary...Pep Guardiola

VALENCIA

DO "*LOS CHES*" HAVE ENOUGH INDIVIDUAL STEEL?

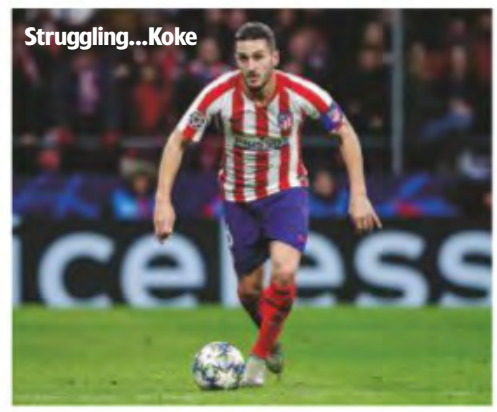
In a recent 3-1 loss to Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup, Valencia came out second-best in every type of one-on-one duel – defensively, in attack, aerially – and coach Albert Celades will have been especially concerned at the ease with which Real sliced his side apart.

Defeat...Valencia (in white) lost to Real in the Super Cup

ATLETICO MADRID

WILL SIMEONE TAKE THE TOUGH DECISION ON KOKE?

Atletico's right-sided midfielder and captain has been an integral part of coach Diego Simeone's masterplan for years, but Koke has been struggling to produce the goods this season. It's certainly not the Simeone style to do sentiment and hard choices will have to be made.



Struggling...Koke

RB LEIPZIG

CAN NAGELSMANN OUTSMART SPURS' MOURINHO?

Twice a winner in this competition, with Porto and Internazionale, Tottenham Hotspur boss Jose Mourinho will have to be wide awake in his battle of wits with fresh-faced RB Leipzig counterpart Julian Nagelsmann, who at 32, is the youngest head coach in the Bundesliga.

Currently in his first season at the controls of the *Roten Bullen*, Nagelsmann is universally regarded as one of the best young coaches on the European circuit. His side went into the winter break in pole position in the Bundesliga and were top of their Champions League group this autumn, losing just once.

Nagelsmann, who cut his Champions League coaching teeth with Hoffenheim in 2017-18, is what's best described as a "footballing chess master". His game plans are flexible, innovative and brave, he has a flair for neutralising opposition strengths, and more often than not he makes the right tactical adjustments. He does not allow bad situations to fester.

His teams are never pedestrian or bland and there is always something interesting cooking in the pot, be it a wrinkle to confuse, a ruse to destabilise or a tweak to cut through. He fizzes with bright ideas, mostly related to cunning movement and surprise deployment of players. Any coach facing him has to be constantly alert to the proliferation of weapons in his attacking playbook: the decoy runs, clever overloads, positional switches, adventurous full-back play and imaginative set-pieces.

He is also a realist, noticeably opting not to conduct a root-and-branch revolution on taking over at RB. More than satisfied with the team's well-established identity – their emphasis on high pressing and swift transitions – his only real change of tack was the widening of their attacking options. He preaches more care in possession, better combination play and far less panic when confronted with heavily entrenched opposition defences.

Star striker Timo Werner has certainly benefitted from Nagelsmann's words of wisdom. Rather than use Werner at the point of attack, Nagelsmann has encouraged the German international to play much deeper, thus giving him the space to exploit his searing pace. And the change has worked wonders for Werner. Not only has he been scoring left, right and centre, he has been making plenty of chances too.

Leipzig went into the winter break in pole position in the Bundesliga and were top of their Champions League group this autumn

Brutal honesty is another of Nagelsmann's traits. Individually and collectively he sets the bar high and does not hesitate to tell home truths. Unhappy with his side's first-half performance in a Bundesliga game this season, his response was scathing, arguing: "If we play like we did in those opening 45 minutes against Bayern and Dortmund there will be absolutely no need to talk about winning a championship. We went into our shell and showed no courage."

He walks the walk and talks the talk. One day he will be managing in the Premier League. The Tottenham clash gives him the chance to display his wares.

Honest...Nagelsmann pulls no punches

Deeper...Timo Werner's role has changed at Leipzig this season and he is reaping the benefits

LIVERPOOL

CAN ANYONE STOP TRENT ALEXANDER-ARNOLD AND ANDY ROBERTSON?

Liverpool's pair of attacking full-backs play a huge part in Jurgen Klopp's battle plans. As yet no one has found an antidote to their penetrative forays, but the Reds may need to find another wide attacking plan if they do.

Attacking...Andy Robertson

CHELSEA

CAN THE BLUES SOLVE THEIR DEFENSIVE DIFFICULTIES?

While manager Frank Lampard orders his team to press high and aggressively, they do find it hard to stay compact when not in possession. They like to play a high defensive line but far too often the co-ordination is lacking, with the offside trap serving as an open door for opposition forwards.

Weakness...Chelsea need defensive resolve

LYON

WILL THIAGO MENDES EVENTUALLY COME GOOD?

OL, who paid Lille €22m for the Brazilian defensive midfielder this summer, thought they had considerably strengthened their engine room. Not so. Though well-endowed technically and intelligent, he is not strong enough in the tackle and too ready to let his head drop. He needs to do better.

Problems... Thiago Mendes

BARCELONA

HOW WILL QUIQUE SETIEN CHANGE BARCA'S PLAY?

"The important thing is the philosophy, to be clear about the way we play. My objective is to win every title. There is no other path but to improve every year and achieve the maximum amount of trophies possible. The best route to victory is playing well. It's important to associate the two.

"I can only guarantee that Barca will play an attractive game. I don't have an extensive CV. I don't have trophies. But what I have is that I've shown a philosophy that I love. The only thing I have done is to make Betis, Las Palmas and Lugo play really good football."

Relaxed, communicative and evidently overjoyed to be appointed Barcelona's new coach, Quique Setien cut a most impressive figure in his introductory press conference at Camp Nou. Brought in to fill the gap left by the sacking of Ernesto Valverde, the 61-year-old – who was a midfielder for Racing Santander, Atletico Madrid and Spain in his playing days – will undoubtedly be embraced by the vast majority of Barca supporters.

And for one simple reason: Setien is a football purist. A huge admirer of ex-Barcelona coaches Johan Cruyff and Pep Guardiola, he represents a welcome return to old-school *Blaugrana* values, a game based on high pressing, relentless possession and quick passing. The plan is for Setien to restore the intensity and proactivity that his predecessor did not appear to overly appreciate.

During Valverde's two-and-a-half season reign Barca effectively lost their DNA. Their performances often were dull, conservative and uninspiring. The entertainment levels plummeted. Setien the romantic should, in theory, lift the clouds and a more expansive style will be on the cards.

A devotee of a three-man back line while at Betis, Setien is unlikely to definitively go with a defensive trio at Barca. The main reason for this is because it is mid-season and he does not really have the time to put a new rearguard system in place. Also, the 4-3-3 formation is in the Barca blood and he will want to avoid breaking this sacred tradition.

Looking to put his stamp on his new team, Setien will probably look to make strides in two specific areas. He says he wants more competition for first-team places and to this end intends to give greater opportunities to graduates from the club's La Masia academy. As a matter of urgency he must also improve the team's positional discipline. On Valverde's

Style...Quique Setien's Barca are expected to play a more expansive game

watch it was next to non-existent.

But who will he turn to now that main striker Luis Suarez has been ruled out until April with a knee injury? The obvious name that springs to mind is French ace Antoine Griezmann, who has regularly floundered since his €120million move from Atletico Madrid.

Floundering...Antoine Griezmann has struggled this season

> **"I can only guarantee that Barca will play an attractive game"**
>
> New coach Quique Setien

Mainly used by Valverde on the left flank, Griezmann was like a fish out of water. He has been less dynamic, not nearly as influential and was generally wasting his energy with all the tracking back he had to do.

As Griezmann has proved on numerous occasions, he is much more effective in a free-roaming role through the middle. Now he has the chance to truly step up and establish some chemistry with Lionel Messi.

JUVENTUS

CAN DE LIGT STEP UP?

Rated a world-beater when playing for Ajax and Holland last season, 20-year-old centre-back Matthijs De Ligt has been benched by coach Maurizio Sarri at Juve. However, he could soon be back in first-team contention now that fellow stopper Merih Demial has suffered an ACL injury.

Benched... Matthijs De Ligt

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

DO SPURS HAVE ANY CHANCE WITHOUT KANE?

With striker Harry Kane ruled out until at least April with a hamstring tear, the North London side are left with a major goalscoring void. And given the reluctance of chairman Daniel Levy to spend big, the prospect of finding an adequate replacement in the transfer market is not good.

Missing... Harry Kane

NAPOLI

WILL PEACE BE GIVEN A CHANCE AT THE STADIO SAN PAOLO?

An armistice would be a bolt from the blue following the events of the autumn, with the squad refusing to attend a "punishment" training camp organised by club president Aurelio De Laurentiis, who then froze wage payments and left many stars looking for a way out. These scars will not heal any time soon.

Troubled...Napoli (in blue) are in disarray

Ones to watch

Nick Bidwell selects the players to look out for in the last 32

Mason Greenwood

MANCHESTER UNITED

The atmosphere in and around Manchester United is always infinitely lighter and more cheerful when top-quality youngsters emerge from their youth ranks, and they have certainly unearthed a diamond in the attacking 18-year-old who has taken the Europa League by storm this season.

With four goals in his five continental outings, the Bradford-born striker has been enjoying himself in the Premier League too, good enough to start in end-of-year wins over Tottenham Hotspur and Newcastle United.

"Every time he plays, he scores," says team-mate Juan Mata after seeing the youngster get a brace in the 4-0 hammering of AZ. "In training he might not touch the ball a lot, but he is a finisher and a killer in the box. He's a nice kid and I'm very happy for him."

Deadly...four goals in five Europa League games

United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, no mean Old Trafford finisher himself, agrees, stating: "I've probably said it all before so it's nothing new: this [scoring goals] is what he does.

"Tomorrow he'll score a few more in training. He's always done it. It comes instinctively to him. The closer he gets to goal, the more dangerous he is. Right foot, left foot, he is a nightmare for defenders. He needs to develop his heading. Then he'll be a proper striker.

"There never was a question of him going on loan. That decision was made early on in pre-season or even towards the end of last season. I knew we had a top talent in him. There's no better place for him to be than here."

Not only is Greenwood United's most prolific marksman in Europe this season, he is also their youngest-ever scorer of a double in UEFA club competition.

All in all, European football has proved a happy hunting ground for the teen who made his senior debut for United as a late sub in the incredible 3-1 Champions League win at Paris Saint-Germain last year. It says much for his ability and character that Solskjaer trusted him

> **"Every time he plays, he scores. In training he might not touch the ball a lot, but he is a finisher and a killer in the box"** Juan Mata

in such a big game, not hesitating to throw him into the fray in the final nerve-jangling minutes at the Parc des Princes.

Comfortable anywhere along the front line, the England under-21 international is a top-to-toe football natural, one of those rare prodigies for whom the game is pure child's play. And indeed it was, first appearing on his club's radar as a six-year-old at a United development school in Halifax, West Yorkshire. On-site coaches simply could not believe how good and how advanced he was, already perfectly two-footed, speedy over the ground, and so willing and quick to learn.

A dozen years and many, many goals later, he now stands on the brink of a glittering career.

The 231st United academy graduate to make the club's first team has every chance of being one of the best.

Unleashed...Angel

ANGEL
GETAFE

Despite frequently being used as an impact sub, the centre-forward has proved deadly in both domestic and continental competition. Has the time come for coach Jose Bordalas to unleash him more often?

MAXIMILIAN ARNOLD
WOLFSBURG

Cultured playmaker with an infuriating capacity to blow hot and cold. On his day, though, he can be sensational. A graduate of the Wolfsburg academy, he was the club's youngest-ever debutant in 2011, at 17 years, 5 months and 30 days.

ENZO CRIVELLI
ISTANBUL BB

Former French under-21 striker who hit the winner in his side's shock 2-1 win at Borussia Monchengladbach. Moved to Turkey last summer from Caen and now Marseille are said to be interested.

CIPRIAN DEAC
CFR CLUJ

Always capable of popping up with a goal or an assist, he is now in his third spell with Cluj.

Capable...Ciprian Deac

UROS MATIC
APOEL

A tough-tackling central midfielder who is more creative than he is given credit for. The Serb is the younger brother of Manchester United's Nemanja Matic.

OSCAR MELENDO
ESPANYOL

Winger whose trickery, elusiveness and final-ball delivery make him a fine prospect. Now 22, he has been with Espanyol since the age of six.

ALFREDO MORELOS
RANGERS

The Colombian has scored an amazing 14 goals in the qualification and group phase. Physically imposing, but often too hot-headed for his own good.

CLAUDIU KESERU
LUDOGORETS

At 33 the Romanian front man remains as sharp as ever in the box. Struck a hat-trick in a 5-1 Europa League victory over CSKA Moscow in September.

Hat-trick... Claudiu Keseru

LUCAS TORREIRA
ARSENAL

New Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta is only too aware of his side's need for back-line protection – which means an automatic starting spot for the Uruguayan midfield enforcer. Arteta's predecessor Unai Emery made a grave error by insisting on using the ex-Sampdoria man higher up the pitch.

ZECA
COPENHAGEN

Influential club captain and source of tactical appreciation. An all-round steadier of the ship, the one-time Portugal under-21 adopted Greek citizenship early in 2017 and went on to play for Greece's national team.

GALENO
BRAGA

The Brazilian left-winger is Braga's assist king in Europe, setting up no fewer than six goals in the group stage. Once on Porto's books, he can be a little raw and naive, but he is tough to stop.

Myron Boadu

AZ

Bullish, powerful and pacy, with a distinct taste for the jugular, AZ's 18-year-old striker has proved an irresistible force this season. A youngster with a point to prove and a sporting voice loud enough to make sure it's heard.

After a terrible run of bad luck with injuries in recent times – he missed much of the 2017-18 campaign with a knee injury and was sidelined for seven months last term with a broken ankle – the teenager is now fit and firing on all cylinders, piling up the goals, creating chances for team-mates and scoring on his Holland debut in November's 5-0 Euro 2020 qualifying win against Estonia.

For the Amsterdam-born son of a Ghanaian father and Dutch mother, the higher the stakes the better he seems to perform. In this season's Europa League he has amassed half a dozen goals as well as being a matchwinner in top-of-the-table Eredivisie clashes, notably netting a brace in a 4-0 win at PSV and scoring the only goal of the game in a precious home victory over Ajax.

At times he appears unstoppable, always loitering on the shoulder of the last defender, and too strong and quick to derail.

> **"Boadu can come up with a goal at any moment, but you sell him short if you only assess him on goals and assists"** AZ coach Arne Slot

With Boadu putting away chances for kicks, AZ are not only serious contenders for a Champions League berth – they may even have a shot of the Dutch title.

"Boadu can come up with a goal at any moment," says his AZ coach Arne Slot. "But you sell him short if you only assess him on goals and assists. He works really hard for the team.

"He applies good aggressive pressure when we're not in possession."

Incredible to think that several years ago, at the age of 11, he was turned down by Ajax, who invited him for a three-day trial but were not especially impressed. Shortly afterwards, he was offered a place at the AZ academy, where he swiftly developed into a youth-team and then reserve-side starlet.

Ajax, hoping that he had forgotten their snub, would later try to lure him away. Arsenal were also keen. But he preferred to stay loyal to AZ. "I never regretted rejecting those clubs," he told *Voetbal International* magazine. "I knew how good I had it at AZ. Ajax had to convince me. They didn't succeed."

Single-minded and self-confident, he took the right option.

Confident... Myron Boadu

Fixtures

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ROUND OF 16 FIRST LEGS

February 18
Borussia Dortmund v Paris Saint-Germain
Atletico Madrid v Liverpool
February 19
Atalanta v Valencia
Tottenham Hotspur v RB Leipzig
February 25
Chelsea v Bayern Munich
Napoli v Barcelona
February 26
Real Madrid v Manchester City
Lyon v Juventus

SECOND LEGS

March 10
Valencia v Atalanta
RB Leipzig v Tottenham Hotspur
March 11
Paris Saint-Germain v Borussia Dortmund
Liverpool v Atletico Madrid
March 17
Manchester City v Real Madrid
Juventus v Lyon
March 18
Bayern Munich v Chelsea
Barcelona v Napoli

QUARTER-FINALS

Draw: March 20
First legs: April 7/8
Second legs: April 14/15

SEMI-FINALS

Draw: 20 March 20
First legs: April 28/29
Second legs: May 5/6

FINAL

May 30
Ataturk Olympic Stadium, Istanbul

EUROPA LEAGUE

ROUND OF 32

First legs February 20; second legs on February 26 or 27
Wolves v Espanyol
Sporting v Istanbul Basaksehir
Getafe v Ajax
Bayer Leverkusen v Porto
Copenhagen v Celtic
APOEL v Basle
CFR Cluj v Sevilla
Olympiakos v Arsenal
AZ v LASK
Club Brugge v Manchester United
Ludogorets v Internazionale
Eintracht Frankfurt v Red Bull Salzburg
Shakhtar Donetsk v Benfica
Wolfsburg v Malmo
Roma v Gent
Rangers v Braga

ROUND OF 16

Draw: February 28
First legs: March 12
Second legs: March 19

QUARTER-FINALS

Draw: March 20
First legs: April 9
Second legs: April 16

SEMI-FINALS

Draw: March 20
First legs: April 30
Second legs: May 7

FINAL

May 27
Gdansk Stadium, Poland

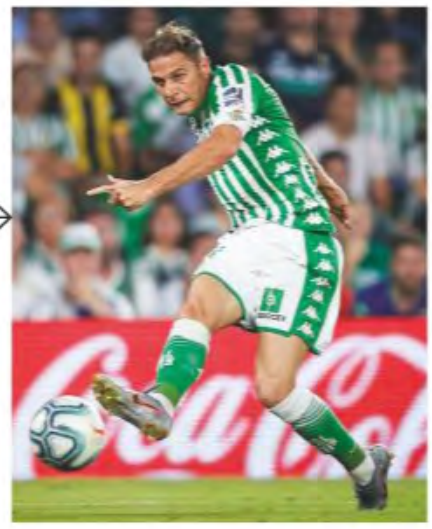
6 of the best

Peter Pans

Nick Bidwell selects half-a-dozen veterans still going strong

1 JOAQUIN

REAL BETIS



The more arduous the route, the greater the satisfaction at journey's end. Just ask the Betis winger and captain who, at the age of 38, struck his first hat-trick; a quick-fire treble in the opening 20 minutes of a 3-2 victory over Athletic Bilbao.

The green-and-white-striped veteran is now the oldest player to have notched three goals in a Liga fixture, breaking a record set in 1964 by Real Madrid maestro Alfredo Di Stefano.

For a beaming Joaquin, capped 51 times for Spain, it was certainly worth the wait – 553 Spanish league games in fact.

"I don't know how I did it," he said afterwards. "I'm not a *goleador*. I don't think I'll manage it again."

The reaction of the Betis board to his exploits? A new contract which will take him through until the summer of 2021.

2 KLAAS-JAN HUNTELAAR

AJAX

The Dutch striker may like to tend his cottage garden in his spare time, but that does not mean the former Holland international, with 76 caps to his name, is gently winding down his career.

Although usually deployed as an impact sub these days, the 36-year-old still plays with a spring in his step and a burning desire to be decisive where it matters.

Since rejoining Ajax in the summer of 2017 after a seven-year sojourn in Germany with Schalke, his goal counter has continued to whir, putting away no fewer than 45 chances over the last two-and-a-half seasons.

Once described by Louis Van Gaal as "the best striker in the world inside the penalty area", he remains the master poacher and claims he has no intention of retiring just yet.

"I'm in my mid-30s, have four children, but still have the feeling that I'm busy doing the youth thing," he says.

"My grown-up life will only start when I quit the game."

3 Vitorino HILTON
MONTPELLIER

Stylish on the ball, strong in the air and an anticipation king, the 42-year-old Brazilian centre-back is the French league's never-ending story. The years pass, the hair lightens and the facial wrinkles deepen, yet he is still a first choice for Montpellier.

No non-French player has made more Ligue 1 appearances – 474 by early January – but those that matter at Montpellier are split on what to do with a player who is in his ninth season with the club.

Club president Laurent Nicollin wants him to call it a day at the end of the season and join the coaching staff, while first-team boss Michel Der Zakarian argues that he is far from a spent force on the pitch.

Hilton attributes his longevity to no smoking, no alcohol, no fast food, no night clubs, no late nights. He does, though, like a coffee.

"It's my vitamin shot," he laughs.

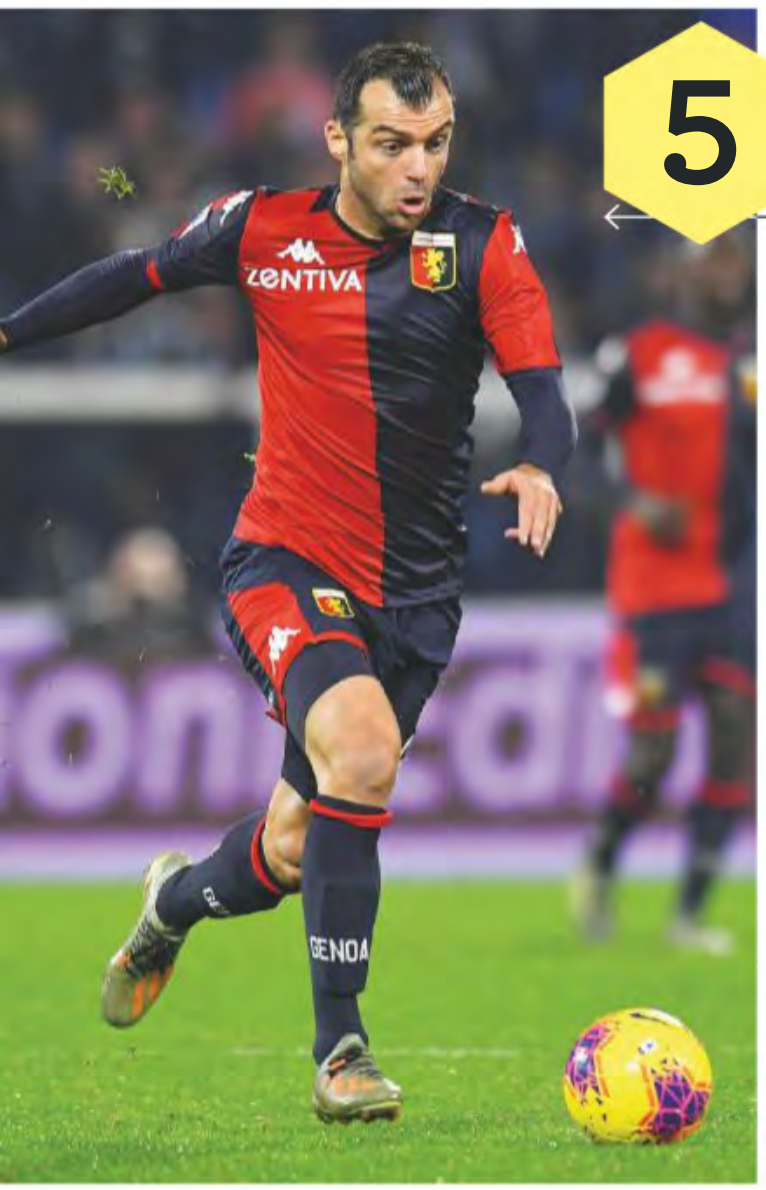
4 Daniel BAIER
AUGSBURG

There are generally three types of player: the attacking/creative game-changer, the grafter, and the sort of footballer whom by word and deed makes those around him better. The 35-year-old Augsburg midfield holder and skipper is a fine example of the latter category.

Once of Munich 1860 and Wolsfburg, he is now in his 12th season with Augsburg yet boasts neither a high profile or the services of a pundit lobby.

More often than not he is only truly appreciated in his absence, when his intelligence is missed.

"He brings a calmness to our game," says Augsburg general manager Stefan Reuter. "He doesn't give the ball away and always is looking to receive it. He keeps the pressure off us."



5 Goran PANDEV
GENOA

After 17 seasons in Italy, with six different clubs, the Macedonian is as relevant as ever. Still as passionate and enthusiastic about the game as he was at the dawn of his career, the 36-year-old is the beating heart of Genoa, always energised and never short of technical magic.

Able to slip into in a variety of roles – either as a second striker, on the wing or as an attacking midfielder – he has two specialities: locating pockets of space between the lines and spectacular goals, the latest of which was a 40-metre special delivery in a 2-2 draw at Lecce in December, an audaciously executed effort, controlling a clearance from opposition keeper Gabriel and immediately firing into the unguarded net.

He is his own nation's most-capped player and their all-time leading marksman, although he also became an Italian citizen last year.

6 Rafael DEFENDI
FAMALICAO

They say that goalkeepers improve with age and that adage certainly applies to the 36-year-old Brazilian who has provided the platform for Famalicao's transformation from Portuguese top-flight new boys into Champions League hopefuls.

Prior to joining Famalicao from Pacos Ferrerira on a free transfer in the summer of 2018 he was regarded by many as being damaged goods, spending much of his final season on the bench.

He was 30 when he moved to Europe, leaving the Bragantino club in his homeland for Pacos. He had, however, spent the 2007-08 season on loan at Portuguese side Aves.

And he has shown great powers of recovery after suffering a fractured skull while playing for Famalicao last term.

Glenn Moore

Making up for lost time

Barcelona women unbeaten at the European winter break

In the vast Barcelona Museum at Camp Nou there is a solitary case devoted to *futbol femení* with photographs, trophies and a brief outline of the club's history. If it seems an afterthought, until recently so did the team.

Though founded in 1970 and an inaugural member of the Spanish league in 1988, the women's team was not fully incorporated into the club until 2002, at which time they were in the second tier. Promotion, relegation and a further promotion followed until, in 2012, they finally won the league.

While that was the first of four successive titles, Athletic Bilbao and then Atletico Madrid usurped their crown, and it is only in the last few years that the Catalans have really decided to push their women's team.

First they made statement signings, notably Brazil's Andressa Alves, Lieke Martens of Holland, England's Toni Duggan and Elise Bussaglia of France. Their ranks bolstered, they began to make an impact in Europe, reaching the Champions League semi-finals in 2017 and the 2019 Final.

This season they began by crushing a new challenge, with the arrival in the women's game of Real Madrid. *Los Merengues* are currently playing under the name of CD Tacon – the newly-promoted side that Real took over control of last year – they play in white, are based at Real's training ground and are Real Madrid in all but name, a fact underlined when they signed Swedish World Cup stars Kosovare Asllani and Sofia Jakobsson.

The teams met on the opening day of the new campaign and Barca, ensconced in the new Estadio Johan Cruyff, thumped their historic rivals 9-1. They followed that up by beating champions Atletico Madrid 6-1, despite conceding in the second minute, and reached the winter break unbeaten, with 12 wins in 13 games.

Spain international Jennifer Hermoso, re-signed during the summer from Atletico, led the way for Barca with 15 goals, while Nigeria's Asisat Oshoala and new Norwegian recruit Caroline Graham Hansen scored another 15 between them.

Atletico were second, five points adrift, but they fell further behind in January, held at Rayo Vallecano while Barca won 3-0 at Bilbao in front of 32,068 at San Mames. If the title continues to drift away, at least Atletico will have a chance of revenge in the Champions League as the Spanish pair have been drawn together in the quarter-finals, when Atleti will be able to field new recruit Deyna Castellanos, the 20-year-old Venezuelan controversially nominated in the three-woman shortlist for FIFA Best in 2017 while still an uncapped student.

> It is only in the last few years the Catalans have really decided to push their women's team

As for Tacon, they went into the new year just below mid-table with 13 points from as many games, before Barcelona provided another reality check as they won the January return fixture 6-0 with Oshoala scoring four.

If Tacon are looking for inspiration they can find it elsewhere in Iberia. The women's team of Portuguese giants Benfica, who are in only their second season, marked their debut campaign by winning promotion and the Portuguese Cup, and this term they went into the winter break leading champions Sporting.

Spain aside, the major leagues took a break with the usual suspects in charge; Arsenal, Wolfsburg, Juventus and Lyon are all on course to retain their titles.

In England the biggest developments were off the pitch. Nick Cushing, who has led Manchester City to one league title, two FA Cups and three League Cups announced he was quitting to become assistant coach at MLS men's club New York City. Days earlier Chelsea gave a debut to their Australian superstar Sam Kerr. She missed a gilt-edged chance in the first minute, but looked sharp in a 3-1 win over Reading. Just ahead of City and Arsenal, as the WSL resumed, were defending champions Arsenal.

While Kerr and Castellanos were the most eye-catching early moves of the January window, also notable was Izzy Christiansen's return to England from Lyon in a coup for Everton.

Her old club are on course for a 14th successive French title, going into the break with a five-point lead over customary challengers Paris Saint-Germain, with a goalless draw at Dijon their only blemish so far.

Wolfsburg and Bayern Munich have occupied the top two places in the Germany for the last five seasons, with the former champions the last three years, but there is a new

Prolific...Jennifer Hermoso is back at Barcelona

Star signing...Sam Kerr of Chelsea

contender this campaign: Hoffenheim. Just as the men's team progressed from fifth tier to first after Dietmar Hopp invested in 2000, so did the women's after being founded in 2007. After a string of mid-table finishes they went into the break in second place, three points behind Wolfsburg who they host when the league resumes on February 14.

No Italian club has gone beyond the quarter-finals in the Champions League, although Bardolino (now Verona) were semi-finalists in its precursor, the UEFA Women's Cup, in 2008. But all that may change after Italy's legalisation of professional women's football.

Previously there was a salary cap limiting broken-time and expenses payments to €60 a week and €77 match bonuses. With the cap's removal and an allocated €11 million over three years to facilitate the transition, the move is likely to result in those Serie A men's clubs still without a female section developing one, and the arrival of more higher-standard foreign players.

At present, Serie A teams are unable to compete in the market with the likes of Lyon, Chelsea and Barcelona – but given the lustre and financial power of clubs such as Juventus and Milan they should be able to do so in the future. WS

Progress...Leonie Pankratz (left) and Tabea Wassmuth of Hoffenheim

Round-up

Joint bid...Australia's Steph Catley (left) and Rebekah Stott of New Zealand

FOUR BIDS FOR 2023 FINALS

Australia and New Zealand have bid to become the first joint Women's World Cup hosts. They will face competition to stage the 2023 finals – the first with 32 teams – from Brazil, Colombia and Japan, with the verdict due in June.

ONLY THORNS FANS TOP TIGRES

Mexico's Tigres may have lost the apertura title to local rivals Monterrey but they can claim to be the second-best supported women's team of 2019, behind only Portland Thorns.

In a dozen games across the regular and post-season, Tigres drew an average 18,573 – capped by the 41,615 who saw the neighbours draw 1-1 in the post-season Final first leg. Monterrey won the second leg 1-0 in front of 38,251 to take the title.

Thorns averaged 20,098 in their dozen NWSL matches.

SACRAMENTO ON HOLD

NWSL will remain at nine clubs for 2020 after an attempt to launch a franchise in Sacramento ran out of time. It now seems likely a team from the Californian capital will join in 2021. along with Kentucky's Proof Louisville FC.

Amanda Duffy, who has effectively been running NWSL as president and MD, is leaving to lead Orlando Pride as executive VP. Utah Royals' English coach Laura Harvey has left to become USA under-20 coach.

NORTH KOREA OPT OUT

North Korea withdrew from the final round of Olympic qualifying in South Korea. This followed the collapse of a proposed joint-bid to host World Cup 2023 by two nations who remain technically at war.

Spearhead... Lynn Williams

US PAIR TRANSFORM WANDERERS DOWN UNDER

Western Sydney Wanderers, last term's bottom team, were surprise front-runners in the W-League with 16 points from a possible 18 before a 4-0 home loss to Brisbane Roar. Their revival is spearheaded by USA internationals Lynn Williams and Kristen Hamilton, both on loan from NWSL champions North Carolina Courage.

Last season's Grand Final runners-up Perth Glory, struggling to deal with the absence of Sam Kerr, took two points from their opening seven matches.

New No1... Jenna Fife

RANGERS MAKE INVESTMENT

Rangers appointed former French men's international Gregory Vignal as coach and made a raft of full-time signings including luring Emma Brownlie (Everton) and Kirsten Reilly (Bristol City) back across the border and keeper Jenna Fife from Hibernian.

Fife was one of several departures from the SWPL cup winners who were also runners-up in both SWPL and Scottish Cup, culminating in the exit of coach Grant Scott, while Edinburgh rivals Hearts were promoted.

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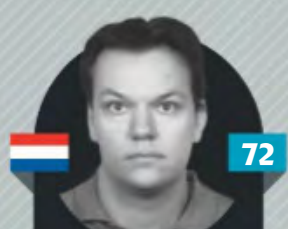

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Through....Mamelodi Sundowns' Andile Jali (left)

Review

Club World Cup

SAMINDRA KUNTI

Liverpool reach the summit

Klopp's side claim first global title

Amid the glitz of the glass skyscrapers and rising World Cup venues of Qatar's capital, European champions Liverpool won their first global crown with a 1-0 victory in Doha over Flamengo in a thrilling and dramatic Club World Cup Final.

Flamengo's industry and quality led to extra time, but Liverpool's Brazilian striker Roberto Firmino broke his compatriots' hearts with a winning goal to hand Liverpool a title that had eluded them previously in 1981, 1984 and 2005.

The Final was a marvellous box-to-box game that delivered on its promise of a fascinating intercontinental encounter. Buttressed by the return of defender Virgil Van Dijk and his commanding presence, Liverpool had three chances inside the first six minutes, exploiting Flamengo's high defensive line. However, Roberto Firmino after 30 seconds, Naby Keita and Trent Alexander-Arnold all failed to make the most of the opportunities they were given.

But Liverpool's barnstorming opening did not bowl over Flamengo and the South American champions recovered their poise to seize possession and dominate the first half without creating any genuine opportunities. Out wide on the left, Bruno Henrique stymied Alexander-Arnold's attacking runs.

In the second half, Roberto Firmino rattled the woodwork and Gabriel Barbosa repeatedly tested Liverpool keeper Alisson, but the Brazilians tired after the 70th minute – perhaps a consequence of a gruelling domestic calendar that required them to play 74 games in 2019. The introduction of Vitinho for Giorgian De Arrascaeta backfired and not even Diego, the veteran statesman and match-winning substitute against both River Plate in the Copa Libertadores Final and Al Hilal in the Club World Cup semi-finals, could exert much influence.

In a bizarre decision, Qatari referee Abdulrahman Al Jassim overturned his decision to award Liverpool an injury-time penalty for a foul by Rafinha on Sadio Mane just as the Senegalese shaped to shoot. VAR showed Mane had been clipped, but following a lengthy on-field review Al Jassim decided that the infringement had occurred outside the penalty box.

With Flamengo physically on their knees, the end was inevitable. Liverpool's 99th-minute winner dashed Flamengo's dream of a global crown, even if substitute Lincoln should have

> "We don't fly 3,000 miles, we don't fly that distance, not to show up"
> Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp

Clinch...Flamengo's Bruno Henrique gets to grips with Joe Gomez of Liverpool

World beaters...Jurgen Klopp leads Liverpool on their lap of honour

equalised in the dying seconds of extra time when he blasted his attempt over from close range.

A composed Liverpool merited their 1-0 victory, with stellar performances from captain Jordan Henderson and keeper Alisson to cap off a resplendent 2019, having won both the Champions League and the European Super Cup. Afterwards, Liverpool coach Klopp praised his team, calling the win "outstanding" and "sensational".

His decision to bring a full-strength squad to Qatar for a tournament that Europe traditionally doesn't value was totally vindicated.

The Club World Cup clashed with Liverpool's League Cup quarter-final at Aston Villa but Klopp prioritised the global finals. Liverpool split their squad to accommodate two matches, held in the space of 48 hours, on two different continents. At Villa, Liverpool fielded their youngest-ever team, with an average age of just over 19, and exited the maligned competition with a 5-0 capitulation.

"We had to make a decision like we did," said Klopp on the eve of Liverpool's

No penalty...Sadio Mane is brought down by Rafinha

semi-final with Mexico's Monterrey. "We knew first that we would be invited to the Club World Cup before we knew how far we would go in the League Cup, so that's how it is. For us, we are here: we don't fly 3,000 miles, we don't fly that distance, not to show up."

Against Monterrey of Mexico, Liverpool did struggle without defensive anchor Van Dijk, who had been ruled out of the semi-final due to illness.

In their fourth Club World Cup, Monterrey eliminated hosts Al Sadd 3-2 in the second round, the Qatari champions – coached by former Barcelona midfielder Xavi – having sent maiden finalists Hienghene Sport from New Caledonia home in the tournament's curtain raiser, 3-1. A first-half equaliser from Antoine Roine was not enough to prevent Al Sadd from running out winners in the first round with extra-time strikes from Abdelkarrim Hassan and Pedro.

In the semi-final, Keita opened the scoring for Liverpool in the 12th minute after a superb reverse through ball from Mohamed Salah, before Rogelio Funes Mori equalised within two minutes for Monterrey. The Mexicans exposed Liverpool's makeshift defence, with Henderson dropping into central defence and James Milner deputising at right-back. Henderson didn't provide Van Dijk's thrust and security, and Monterrey's Dorlan Pabon proved a scourge for the English rearguard. In the 27th minute, the Mexican captain forced a fine save from Alisson.

After the interval, Klopp switched to a 4-2-3-1 formation to reinforce his midfield. However, Liverpool still needed Alisson's presence of mind to prevent Pabon and Funes Mori from giving the CONCACAF champions the lead. Monterrey's pace and strength unsettled Liverpool. The Mexicans even demanded a red card for Joe Gomez when, already booked, the defender was penalised for handball.

On the touchline, Klopp berated his Monterrey counterpart Antonio Mohamed, who later commented: "For me, there was a red card, especially the first foul and the second. So, I talked to the referee. Maybe a Liverpool shirt has more weight, therefore the Liverpool player wasn't sent off."

Attack...Al Hilal's Sebastian Giovinco takes on Flamengo

Going home... Hienghene Sport concede to Al Sadd

Klopp introduced Mane, Alexander-Arnold and Roberto Firmino, and the latter two combined to ensure passage to the Final when the Brazilian tapped in an injury-time cross.

On the other side of the draw, Flamengo played Asian champions Al Hilal in the last four. The Saudi club had eliminated African champions Esperance in the second round with a single goal from substitute Bafetimbi Gomis.

Esperance demonstrated robust organisation and marking, but they were underwhelmed in attack. However, they came good to win a fifth-place play-off against 10-man Al Sadd with winger Hamdou Elhouni's hat-trick dismantling the hosts in a 6-2 win, a result that left coach Xavi fuming and under pressure.

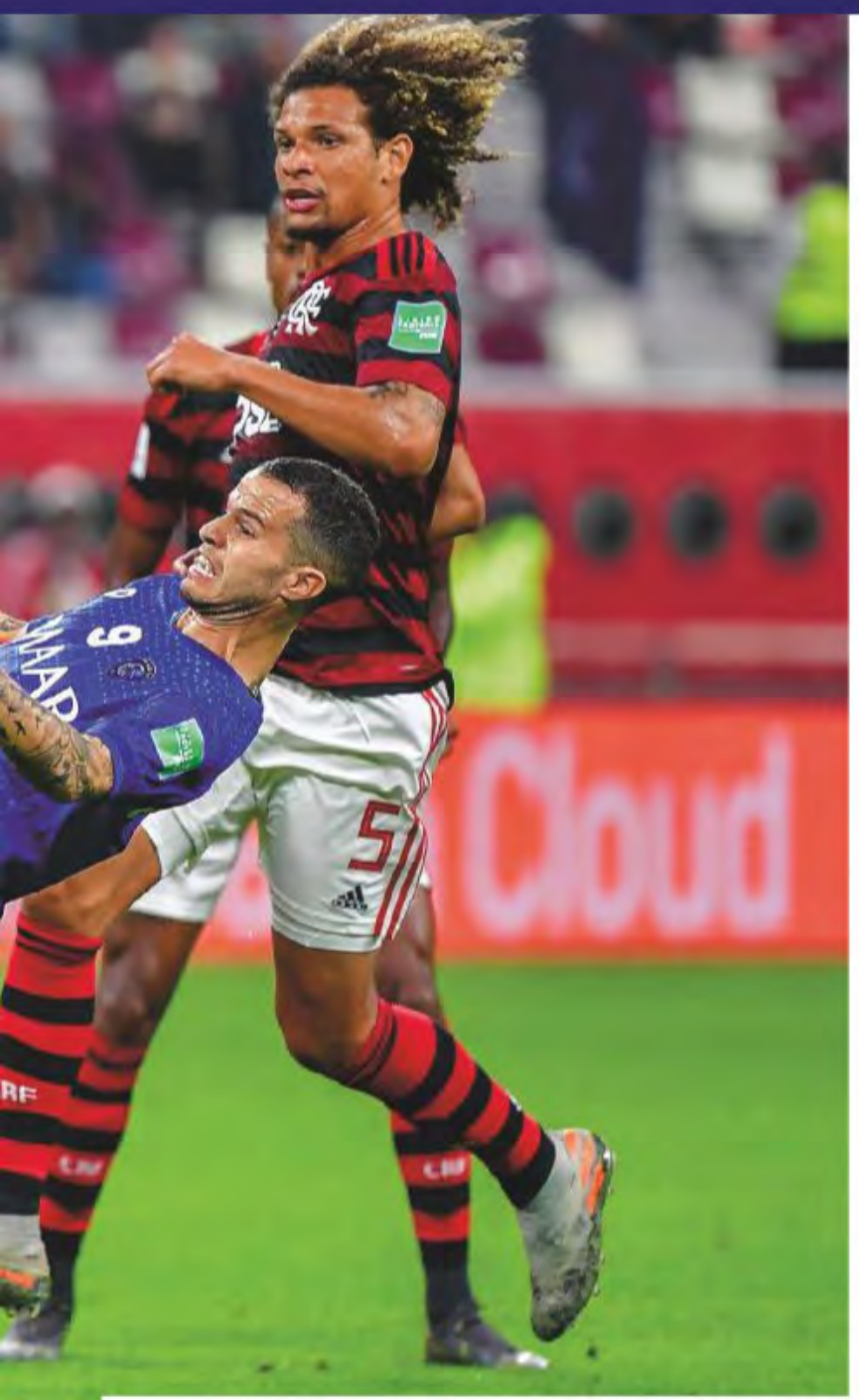
"I'm very sad, very disappointed and very angry because we played the first two matches really well," he said. "We are Al Sadd and we're playing against African champions and our attitude during the first 20 minutes isn't acceptable."

For Flamengo, the Al Hilal semi-final represented a pitfall. Last year, the UAE's Al Ain had knocked out River Plate at the same stage and past South American champions Internacional, Atletico Mineiro and Nacional had all suffered similar fates in recent Club World Cups.

In the 18th minute, Salem Al Dawsari handed the Saudi team the lead from close range, highlighting the fact that Al Hilal's financial muscle under the patronage of Saudi prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, along with its efforts on talent development and storied history, were a potent mix to overcome.

A sloppy Flamengo were given a reality check by Al Hilal before the Brazilian club rediscovered their penchant for stirring comebacks in the second half. The vulnerable Willian Arao dropped deeper, and Barbosa and Bruno Henrique played closer to each other. In the 49th minute, De Arrascaeta was on the end of a slick move to equalise. The introduction of Diego swayed the game in Flamengo's favour. First, Bruno Henrique and then Ali Al Buhaili's own goal sealed Al Hilal's fate.

In the Final, a repeat of Flamengo's greatest moment in history – when the Rio club, led by Zico, breezed past the English club 3-0 in the 1981



Hopeful...a Flamengo fan in Qatar

Intercontinental Cup – was not to be.

At least Flamengo managed to play Liverpool on their own terms, with their European-styled possession football, but there was no escaping Liverpool's high press, mobility, and quick transitions, the result of a four-year marriage between the German coach and the English institution. Klopp has transformed Liverpool into Europe's latest super club, something that Flamengo, with a 2019 record revenue of £161 million, can only aspire to become.

Last year Liverpool conquered the world and, building on that 2019 success, the club now wants to create a dynasty by winning the most elusive silverware yet in 2020: the Premier League. WS

Qatar under scrutiny

The Club World Cup was the first major test run ahead of the global finals in 2022 and another opportunity for the organisers to overcome foreign scepticism.

The tournament was the second FIFA competition in Qatar after the country had stepped in to stage the 1995 Youth World Championship after an outbreak of meningitis thwarted the hosting plans of Nigeria.

The organisers were, however, forced into a last-minute venue change when Education City Stadium, a 2022 World Cup venue slated to host matches up to the quarter-finals stage, was deemed unfit. FIFA said that "the necessary certification process took longer than expected and therefore the stadium was unable to host the required test events".

The rethink came after Doha's Al Janoub Stadium struggled to cope with the influx of fans during the Gulf Cup semi-final between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Organisers feared similar issues could have impeded operations at Education City Stadium, so both semi-finals and the Final moved to the Khalifa International Stadium – Qatar's national stadium and the venue for the 2019 World Athletics Championships, which received criticism for extreme heat and sparse crowds.

While stories of corruption and human-rights abuses continue to taint the build-up to the 2022 World Cup, Tamin El Abed – project manager at the construction site of Lusail Stadium, where the World Cup Final will be staged – claimed that the 4,000 labourers working on site earn about $350 per month, get a day off every week and are entitled to a flight ticket home once a year. He added that the workers have access to sporting facilities and relaxation areas.

The rigid "kafala" system in use in Qatar, which ties workers to sponsorship by their employers, remains contentious, but the International Labour Organisation has been working with Qatar to reform labour laws.

The Lusail Stadium will seat 80,000 and the Club World Cup was the first time Qatar has had to deal with large volumes of foreign fans, with 21,580 Brazilians arriving to watch Flamengo. Mohamed Salah also drew crowds of Egyptian expats in the Qatari capital, selling out both Liverpool games with 45,416 fans at the Khalifa International Stadium.

Fans had the opportunity to test out the city's newly inaugurated metro for free on match days and they could enjoy some reasonably priced beer at the fan zone. Katy Perry, Maroon 5 and Cheb Khaled provided entertainment at a festival building up to Qatar's national day when FIFA president Gianni Infantino was the guest of honour.

This was the first time that Qatar has had to deal with large volumes of foreign fans

Of course, the question of the Club World Cup's importance is never far away and it will return to Qatar in December for a final time in its current format before morphing into a 24-team event in 2021.

"FIFA plans a team World Cup in the summer but it is the summer when the African competition is playing and others as well," said Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp.

"We have a lot of fans in this part of the world and they watch us in the middle of the night, so it is nice we come closer.

"But from an organisation point of view they have to talk, because otherwise FIFA say we'll have a tournament, and UEFA say so will we, and then South America too. And they all think their tournament is most important. You cannot just add on tournaments. It doesn't work."

Under construction ...Lusail Stadium

SOUTH AMERICAN LEAGUES REVIEW

	HOW THE LEAGUE WAS WON	CONTINENTAL QUALIFIERS	PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Bolivia PRIMERA DIVISION	Bolivar won the apertura, their 29th title, while Jorge Wilstermann went undefeated in their last 17 games to snatch the clausura crown, their 15th title. The Strongest finished second in both competitions.	Bolivar and Jorge Wilstermann qualify for the Copa Libertadores group stage, while The Strongest and San Jose enter the qualifying phase. Nacional Potosi, Blooming, Always Ready and Oriente Petrolero go into the Copa Sudamericana qualifiers.	Leonel Justiniano won the first title of the year with Bolivar and then moved to Jorge Wilstermann, where his calm solidity in midfield was so important to their triumph as he became the first player to win two Bolivian titles in the same year with different clubs.
Chile PRIMERA DIVISION	The league championship was suspended in November as a result of the civil protests taking place across the country. Defending champions Universidad Catolica, who were leading the table after 14 rounds, retained their title.	Universidad Catolica and second-place Colo-Colo enter the Copa Libertadores group stage, with third-place Palestino in the second qualifying stage. Union La Calera, Coquimbo Unido, Huachipato and Audax Italiano are in the Copa Sudamericana.	A buzzing figure down Universidad Catolica's right flank, Jose Pedro Fuenzalida is getting better as he moves into his mid-30s, combining constant movement with consistent end product.
Colombia PRIMERA A	Junior won the apertura after beating Deportivo Pasto on penalties in the play-off Final, but they lost the Finalizacion play-off Final to America de Cali, 2-0 on aggregate.	Junior and America qualify for the Copa Libertadores group stage, while Deportes Tolima and cup-winners Independiente Medellin go into the qualifying stage. Deportivo Cali, Atletico Nacional, Millonarios and Deportivo Pasto go into the Copa Sudamericana.	Aggressive, mobile striker Michael Rangel helped Junior win the first championship of the year and he was top scorer in America's triumph in the second.
Ecuador SERIE A	The league was expanded from 12 to 16 teams. Under the new format the teams played each other home and away, with the top eight teams entering a play-off phase. Delfin beat LDU Quito on penalties in the play-off Final to claim their first title.	Delfin, LDU Quito and Independiente del Valle enter the Copa Libertadores group stage, while Macara and Barcelona go into the qualifiers. Universidad Catolica, Aucas, Emelec and El Nacional are in the Copa Sudamericana.	A rangy striker who recovered his early career momentum with a magnificent goalscoring year, Macara's Michael Estrada won an international call-up and a move to Toluca in Mexico at the end of the year.
Paraguay PRIMERA DIVISION	Olimpia continued their domination of the championship, winning both the apertura and clausura championships, their third and fourth successive titles.	Olimpia and Libertad qualified for the Copa Libertadores group stage, with Cerro Porteno and Guarani in the qualifying rounds. Sol de America, Nacional, River Plate and Sportivo Loqueno qualified for the Copa Sudamericana.	Roque Santa Cruz is a centre-forward who remains a class act at the age of 38. A consistent marksman throughout 2019, he ended the year with a glut of goals to help get Olimpia over the line.
Peru LIGA 1	Apertura winners Binacional, from Juliaca close to the Peru-Bolivia border, won their first-ever title, beating Clausura champions Alianza Lima 4-3 on aggregate in the play-off Final.	Binacional and Alianza Lima qualify directly for the Copa Libertadores group stage, with Sporting Cristal and Universitario in the qualifying stage. Sport Huancayo, Melgar and Real Garcilaso qualified for the Copa Sudamericana.	Artful Colombian playmaker Donald Millan was the creative force behind Binacional's unlikely title triumph, scoring, setting up and dictating the rhythm. He has now joined Universitario.
Uruguay PRIMERA DIVISION	Nacional, having won the clausura title, won their 47th league title, beating apertura winners Penarol in a play-off.	Nacional and Penarol both qualify for the Copa Libertadores group stage. Cerro Largo and Progreso, third and fourth in the aggregate table, qualified for the qualifying rounds. Liverpool, Plaza Colonia, River Plate and Fenix, qualified for the Copa Sudamericana.	Nacional's Matias Vina played left-back and centre back for Uruguay's under-20s, but it was in the former position that he established himself at club level and then first choice for his country at senior level.
Venezuela PRIMERA DIVISION	Champions Caracas won the Torneo Clausura by defeating Deportivo Tachira in the Final and then beating apertura winners Estudiantes de Merida in the championship Final on penalties to claim their 12th league title.	Caracas and Estudiantes de Merida qualified for the Copa Libertadores group stage, with Deportivo Tachira and Carabobo in the qualifying stages. Minera, Aragua and Llaneros qualified for the Copa Sudamericana.	Joel Graterol is an athletic keeper who helped Zamora to win the domestic cup. Did so well in a losing cause in the Libertadores that he earned a move to Colombian champions America.

Compiled by Tim Vickery

COACH OF THE YEAR		NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR	2020
Coming off the back of a title win in El Salvador, Argentinian boss Christian Diaz made an excellent impact on his debut in Bolivian football, taking over a Jorge Wilstermann side that finished sixth in the first championship to win the second.	Double...Leonel Justiniano	Dynamic central midfielder Franz Gonzales stood out in a Sport Boys side that was collapsing around him. The under-20 international should have no problems finding a more stable home in the future.	The apertura and clausura are both home-and-away leagues, with the winners of each qualifying for the group stage of the Copa Libertadores. The remaining two Libertadores places and the four Copa Sudamericana places are decided by the aggregate table.
Argentinian-born, naturalised Bolivian coach Gustavo Quinteros added to an impressive track record, building a Universidad Catolica side that enjoyed clear superiority over their domestic rivals. He has since joined Tijuana in Mexico.	Late developer ... Guillermo Soto	Something of a late developer, having to wait until his mid-20s for his breakout season, Guillermo Soto enjoyed a fine year as a rampaging, overlapping right-back for Palestino.	Because no one was relegated, the league will be expanded to an 18-team competition, with all the teams playing each other on a home-and-away basis.
Brazilian-born, Costa Rican coach Alexandre Guimaraes made a huge impact in his first spell in South American football, ending America's wilderness years with a first title win in over a decade.	Champions...America	Daniel Munoz exploded at 23 when given his first chance with a big club as Atletico Nacional got the best out of his ability to burst forward from right-back. A goal threat both on the ground and in the air.	With half of the 2020 Copa America due to be staged in Colombia in June and July, the apertura second stage will be reduced to four teams (from eight) in order to finish the competition in time to break for the Copa America.
In charge of the best season in the history of modest Macara, Paul Velez's side were outstanding in the league phase and were only narrowly beaten in the semi-finals. After an interesting body of work with second-tier sides, something bigger cannot be far off.	Historic... Paul Velez	Independiente del Valle's Jhon Jairo Sanchez enjoyed a fine year as a right-footed attacking midfielder playing wide on the left wing and cutting in onto his stronger foot. A key ingredient in his club's Copa Sudamericana triumph.	The league will revert to the pre-2019 three-stage system. The first and second stages will each be played in a 15-match round-robin format, with the top teams qualifying for the final play-off stage.
Olimpia's Daniel Garnero has now helped himself to four Paraguayan titles in a row, this year with a record points and goals tally.	Class...Roque Santa Cruz	While it is surely easier to blood youngsters in a winning side, wearing the shirt of a big club brings its own pressures, and Olimpia's under-20 international midfielder Hugo Quintana dealt with them well in his breakthrough season.	The apertura and clausura tournaments will again be played over 22 games (11 teams playing home and away). An aggregate table will decide the continental qualifiers.
Roberto Mosquera wrote another chapter in a fascinating career. Having taken Bolivia's Jorge Wilstermann to the last eight of the 2017 Copa Libertadores, he has now won the Peruvian title with a club only founded in 2010.	Fascinating ...Roberto Mosquera	Combative, burly Sporting Cristal defensive midfielder Jesus Pretell benefited from a loan spell with San Martin in 2018 and on his return to his parent club he slotted in so well that he won a call-up to the senior Peru squad.	The apertura and clausura championships will be expanded to 20 teams, each with 19 games, before a play-offs featuring the two championship winners plus the top two teams in the aggregate table.
Cerro Largo's Danielo Nunez enjoyed a magnificent year with one of the few clubs that are based outside Montevideo. The men from Melo finished fourth and fifth in the two championships and will make their debut in the Copa Libertadores this year.	Established... Matias Vina (left)	Just turned 18, Facundo Pellistri made a huge impression towards the end of the year playing wide on the right for Penarol. Fluid on the ball, with a neat turn of pace, he is two footed, has impressive vision and looks a real find.	The 16-team championship will again comprise of the apertura tournament and the clausura, with an end-of-season play-off to decide the champions.
Back to winning ways at Caracas after his unhappy time in charge of the national team, Noel Sanvicente won his eighth league title – and his club's first in a decade.	Wait over ...Caracas	Talented central midfielder Daniel Saggiomo came of age during the course of the year, producing consistently creative displays that were a big part of Caracas' title success.	The league is set to feature 19 teams, following the withdrawal of Deportvo Anzoategui due to outstanding debts.

Compiled by Tim Vickery

DECEMBER 11, 2019-JANUARY 15, 2020

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Wednesday December 11

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: With a 3-1 victory over Tottenham Hotspur, Bayern Munich become only the sixth team to win all six group games in the competition, following in the footsteps of Milan, Paris Saint-Germain, Spartak Moscow, Barcelona and Real Madrid (twice).
USA: Not to be confused with the new MLS side Inter Miami which is part-owned by David Beckham, Miami FC purchase the franchise rights of disbanded Ottawa Fury and will play in the USL.

Thursday December 12

SCOTLAND: Alfredo Morelos' goal in Rangers' 1-1 Europa League draw with Young Boys is his 14th of the campaign – the most ever scored by one player in a UEFA club competition before Christmas.
SPAIN: Three former players of fourth-tier Arandina – Raul Calvo, Victor Rodriguez and Carlos Cuadrado – receive 38 years in prison for sexually assaulting a 15-year-old girl at a flat in 2017.

Friday December 13

BRAZIL: Chapecoense defender Neto, who was one of just six survivors of the air crash that killed 71 people in 2016, announces his playing retirement. The 34-year-old spent two years rehabilitating and returned to training in March but explains: "My body couldn't take it anymore. The pains were bigger than the pleasure."

Saturday December 14

GERMANY: Cologne striker Jan Thielmann becomes the first player born in 2002 to feature in the Bundesliga as his side beat local rivals Bayer Leverkusen 2-0.
SOUTH AFRICA: Uruguay's Mauricio Affonso gets both goals as Mamelodi Sundowns beat Maritzburg United 2-1 in the Premier League Cup Final.
TURKMENISTAN: Altyn Asyr complete a domestic treble, beating Ahal 3-0 in the Turkmenistan Cup Final and have now won 14 of the 18 trophies on offer since 2014.
ZIMBABWE: FC Platinum win their third league title on the trot, beating Caps United 1-0 on the last day of the season.

Sunday December 15

HOLLAND: International striker Memphis Depay looks set to miss the rest of the season and the summer's European Championship after rupturing anterior cruciate ligaments while playing for Lyon against Rennes.
ITALY: For the second time in Serie A this season, all three subs score for a team, as Verona come back to draw 3-3 with Torino thanks to goals from Giampaolo Pazzini, Valerio Verre and Mariusz Stepinski.
SPAIN: Rayo Vallecano's Segunda Division game is abandoned at half-time after home supporters chant that Albacete's Roman Zozulya is a Nazi. The Ukraine international striker, who has always denied links with far-right groups, joined Rayo on loan in 2017 but the deal was cancelled hours later after fans turned up at training with a banner claiming that the town was "not a place for Nazis".

Monday December 16

FIFA: Claims are filed in the Swiss courts by FIFA against ex-president Joseph Blatter and former vice-president Michel Platini, seeking restitution of the 2m Swiss francs paid to Platini in February 2011.
FRANCE: Saint-Etienne are banned from staging games at their Stade Geoffroy-Guichard until further notice after fans set off a barrage of fireworks in Sunday's 4-0 home loss to Paris Saint-Germain.

Tuesday December 17

USA: The North Carolina city of Charlotte is handed MLS' latest expansion franchise and will join the league in 2021.

Wednesday December 18

EAFF E-1 CHAMPIONSHIP: Japan need just one point in their final game to be crowned East Asian champions, but a solitary goal from Hwang In-beom gives opponents South Korea their fifth regional title.
ITALY: Cagliari name Gigi Riva honorary president ahead of their upcoming centenary year to mark

Triumphant...Mamelodi Sundowns celebrate winning the South African Premier League Cup Final against Maritzburg United

Winner...Hwang In-beom of South Korea

the 50th anniversary of the former striker leading the club to their one and only championship success.

Thursday December 19

CECAFA SENIOR CHALLENGE CUP: Hosts Uganda beat Eritrea 3-0 in the Final to win the trophy for a record-extending 15th time. Defending champions Kenya finish third after beating Tanzania 2-1 in the play-off.

Friday December 20

GERMANY: Jadon Sancho fails to score for the first time in eight games as Borussia Dortmund lose 2-1 at Hoffenheim. The 19-year-old finishes the calendar year with 15 Bundesliga goals, equalling the record for a teenager set by Horst Koppel for Stuttgart in 1967 and Olaf Thon for Schalke in 1985.

Saturday December 21

ENGLAND: Liverpool are Club World Cup champions for the ➤

Stopped... Jadon Sancho's run is over

Caymen Islands

STEVE MENARY

On the up...the national side

Nations League offers new hope

Fortunes change after nine years without a win

Adopted from Europe, the Nations League idea has proved popular in the Caribbean in getting inactive national teams playing regularly and providing winnable games, with the Cayman Islands a shining example of how this has succeeded.

Placed in League C, Ben Pugh's side won their opening game 2-0 in the US Virgin Islands and then shocked favourites Barbados, winning 3-2 on home soil in George Town. A 3-0 loss away to Saint Martin followed, but after wining their next two games they went into the final game in Barbados top of the table and in with a shot at promotion.

"I think they underestimated us in the first game," says Pugh, who only took charge in May. And despite losing that final game 3-0 in Bridgetown, he can only see positives.

"We hadn't won a game for nearly nine years and then we won four out of six," adds Pugh, who was previously a coach in Ipswich Town's youth set-up.

"The first thing I had to do was add a bit of structure and create a better culture. From there we were able to build a team of players who are hungry to succeed as individuals and as a team.

"The goal is always to win games and be typically hard to beat. We've started this. There is, of course, a way to go.

"There's lots of young talent here, like Barry Tibbetts who is only 17 and has the potential to play at a higher level, but we've got to get them off the island as soon as possible to play."

One of the few players to try to make a career abroad is 20-year-old Anton Nelson, who played non-league in England at Bognor Regis Town and Llanelli Town in the Welsh Premier League before heading home last summer.

"I travelled to the UK with no club or opportunity and just contacted every club I could find in non-league," says Nelson. "My first season in the UK with Bognor was really a massive learning curve. I found the pace of the game was a lot quicker and you had far less time to make a decision."

Nelson did not feature in the Nations League and neither did Elijah Seymour, who is with Voluntari in Romania. The only off-island player in the squad was Mason Duval, an 18-year-old left-back who is studying at Elon University in the USA.

"The Nations League has given our players a platform to show what they can do and test themselves against equal opposition," says Pugh. "It has also shown us that we have players who need a greater test than playing in our local league."

To boost the domestic game there are now plans to include the national under-20 and under-17 teams in the first and second tiers respectively. WS

> "There's lots of young talent here ...but we've got to get them off the island as soon as possible to play"
> National coach Ben Pugh

China

JOHN DUERDEN

New year, new rules

CFA introduces new regulations on foreign players

It wouldn't be a new year without some new rules introduced by the Chinese Football Association (CFA) – although this time there is more support for the changes than has been the case in the past.

The big one is the introduction of a salary cap, but the number of foreign players allowed to sign and play for clubs has also been tweaked again, this time in an upwards direction. For the 2020 season, clubs can have six overseas players on their books, five in the matchday squad and four on the pitch at any given time – which is up from three last year.

This puts the Chinese Super League in line with much of Asia, though one of the spots is not reserved exclusively for an Asian player. According to the Chinese media, this means there will be more Asians – usually South Koreans, with a smattering of Uzbeks and Australians – on the shopping list of clubs as they are cheaper.

And price is going to be more of an issue for clubs as the authorities look to stop the financial losses and introduce some semblance of sustainability.

The huge spending spree that started in earnest back in 2011 – and brought in world-famous coaches such as Marcello Lippi, Felipe Scolari and Fabio Capello, along with top stars such as Paulinho, Carlos Tevez and Didier Drogba – has slowed in recent years. This is partly the result of a "transfer tax" that forced clubs buying a foreign player to pay the same amount as the transfer fee into a central pool.

There is no doubt that Beijing is concerned about the massive amounts of money leaving the country to line the pockets of clubs, players and agents around Europe and South America. So the authorities are once again trying to limit spending, with CFA chairman Chen Xuyuan explaining: "Our clubs had too much money burned and our professional football has not been run in a sustainable way. If we don't take timely action, I fear it will collapse."

Starting with the 2020 season, Chinese Super League teams will not be able to spend more than 1.1 billion yuan (€143million) a year or more than 60 per cent of their total outlay on salaries. At an individual level, for new signings in 2020 and beyond, domestic players can be paid, after tax, no more than 10m yuan (€1.3m), though national-team players can receive 20 per cent more. Foreigners will have a salary limit of around €3m a year.

> "Our professional football has not been run in a sustainable way. If we don't take timely action, I fear it will collapse"
>
> CFA chairman Chen Xuyuan

The reaction so far has been fairly favourable as there was a growing concern at clubs, both big and small, that the spending was all a bit too much.

"Having a salary cap can help teams develop more sustainably," says Li Ming, general manager of Beijing Guoan. "Regulations are necessary in a professional environment. The Chinese Football Association really values our opinions. They spent all day with us discussing how to make this new policy viable."

With bonuses not yet covered in the cap, it remains to be seen how tightly these new stipulations are enforced. Chinese organisations and companies are adept at quickly finding out just how far rules can be pushed. And if there are big stars willing to come to

Expensive... Shanghai SIPG's Hulk (right)

first time, beating Flamengo 1-0 in the Final.

HOLLAND: Ajax defender Daley Blind is diagnosed with a heart condition after suffering dizziness during his side's Champions League game with Valencia.

ITALY: At 17, Sebastiano Esposito becomes Internazionale's youngest scorer in more than 60 years as his side win 4-0 against Genoa.

Sunday December 22

GERMANY: Bayern Munich announce Hansi Flick, who became interim coach on November 3, will remain in charge "at least until the end of the season".

ITALY: Italian Cup winners Lazio beat league champions Juventus 3-1 to win the Italian Super Cup in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

MALAWI: Zimbabwean coach Callisto Pasuwa wins his sixth league title on the trot as Big Bullets claim the Super League with a 2-0 victory over TN Stars. Pasuwa won four successive league championships in his homeland before taking the national job and then joining Bullets late last season.

Monday December 23

ERITREA: For the second time this year, players representing Eritrea go missing while on international duty. Seven of the squad that finished runners-up in the CECAFA Senior Challenge Cup in Uganda fail to return home, after five players fled from their hotel during October's CECAFA Under-20 Challenge Cup.

GREECE: The home of the video assistant referee is attacked just hours after Olympiakos have a goal ruled out by VAR in their 0-0 draw with Volos.

Saturday December 28

SAUDI ARABIA: Abderrazak Hamdallah's hat-trick for Al Nassr against Al Feiha in the Saudi Pro League sees him become the world's top scorer of 2019, ending the year with 57 goals in all competitions, beating Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski who scored 54 and Barcelona's Lionel Messi who got 50.

Monday December 30

GUINEA: Alfred Kargbo and Aboubacar Camara of top-flight side Wakriya are killed, along with the driver, after the club's team bus crashes into a stationary truck late at night on the journey back from a 2-1 defeat away to league

Historic... Espanyol's Wu Lei (left) gets the better of Sergio Ramos and Real Madrid

China, ways to make it happen may still be found.

These new cost-cutting rules are not just an end in themselves, designed to make clubs a little more financially responsible. Just as foreign players have commanded big salaries in recent years, the take-home pay of local talent has also risen dramatically. China has concluded that high domestic salaries are a barrier to exporting talent and it wants to follow in the footsteps of Australia, Korea and Japan and see its players in action all over the world. These three nations qualify for every World Cup and they are also the continent's top exporter of players.

At the moment the best Chinese players are paid much more at home than they could ever earn elsewhere. As the country – which has only ever qualified for one World Cup and lost all three matches once there – is not exactly seen as a hotbed of talent, European clubs are not going to pay massive salaries to bring in little-known players from a country that consistently struggles on the international stage.

Wu Lei, whose recent goal for Espanyol against Barcelona was hailed by new national coach Li Tie as an honour for Chinese football, is the sole Chinese player operating in the big European leagues. But, according to reports in China, he took a pay cut of around 50 per cent to go to Spain.

Many of Wu's compatriots may not want to make the same short-term financial sacrifice. However, if they are paid less at home then going overseas – and it does not have to be the top leagues of Europe, as authorities want to see Chinese players in action all over Asia – may become more attractive. WS

leaders Loubha Telimele.

Thursday January 2

GHANA: All of the country's national coaches, at all levels of the international game for both male and female teams, are removed by the Ghana Football Association.

ITALY: Juventus make Atalanta midfielder Dejan Kulusevski the second-most expensive teenager in Serie A history – after Matthijs De Ligt at €75m – as they pay €35m plus €9m in add-ons for the Swede.

Friday January 3

FRANCE: Guingamp's 23-year-old striker Nathael Julan dies in a car crash after training.

Saturday January 4

FRANCE: An amateur side from the island of Reunion, JS Saint-Pierroise travel 6,000 miles to beat second-tier Niort 2-1 and reach the last 32 of the Coupe de France. No team from Reunion, off the east coast of Africa, has reached the knockout stage of the competition before.

Sunday January 5

FRANCE: Toulouse sack Antoine Kombouare the day after a 1-0 loss to amateur club Saint-Pryve Saint-Hilaire in the Coupe de France. His side were are also bottom of Ligue 1 following nine straight defeats.

Monday January 6

ITALY: Cristiano Ronaldo scores a hat-trick in Serie A for the first time as Juventus win 4-0 at home to Cagliari, taking his tally to eight goals in his last five league games. It is the 56th treble of his career and means that he has now scored against every team in Serie A in less than two years at Juve.

Tuesday January 7

GREECE: Ex-Serbia & Montenegro striker Darko Kovacevic is shot at outside his home in the Athens suburb of Glyfada as he gets out of his car. The 46-year-old suffered minor injuries to his wrist and knees as he dived for cover.

SPAIN: Segunda Division Malaga suspend coach Victor Sanchez after an explicit video of the 43-year-old is posted on social media. Sanchez said he had been blackmailed over the video prior to it being published.

Wednesday January 8

ITALY: Paolo Dal Pino is elected president of Serie A, ending more than a month of interim leaders ➤

➤ after the resignation of Gaetano Micciche in November following an investigation into his 2018 election.

Thursday January 9

ENGLAND: Tottenham Hotspur say England captain Harry Kane is unlikely to return to training until April as the striker needs surgery on a hamstring injury suffered during Spurs' loss at Southampton on New Year's Day.
HOLLAND: Sergino Dest, who was born in Holland but has an American father and has played three times for the USA, leaves Ajax's winter training camp in Qatar as he does not feel safe due to the political tensions between the United States and Iran. The 19-year-old defender's decision follows a similar move the previous week by the USA national team, who cancelled a trip to Qatar after Iranian general Qasem Soleimani was killed in a US air strike.
RUSSIA: Viktor Kassai of Hungary, who was in charge of the 2011 Champions League Final when Barcelona beat Manchester United 3-1, is to run the Russian Football Union's refereeing department following a series of high-profile disputes over the standard of decision-making in the league.

Friday January 10

OLYMPICS: FIFA president Gianni Infantino is elected to the International Olympic Committee.

Saturday January 11

SPAIN: Malaga sack coach Victor Sanchez four days after he was suspended following the publication of a video on social media.

Sunday January 12

ENGLAND: Sergio Aguero's hat-trick in Manchester City's 6-1 win at Aston Villa is a record 12th treble in the Premier League for the Argentinian and takes him to 177 goals in total, making him the competition's highest-scoring overseas player.

Monday January 13

SPAIN: Barcelona sack a coach in the middle of the season for the first time since Louis Van Gaal in 2006, dismissing Ernesto Valverde and replacing him with former Real Betis boss Quique Setien, despite being top of La Liga and having won the title in his two previous campaigns. Former Barca midfielder Xavi had been tipped to return and confirmed that he had spoken to the club's sporting ➤

Van Bommel pays price at PSV

Coach sacked by underperformers

Mark Van Bommel seemed to have a bright future as coach of PSV, the club he served so successfully as a player. And who knows what might have been? But after a year and a half in Eindhoven his career ran ashore as he was sacked unceremoniously.

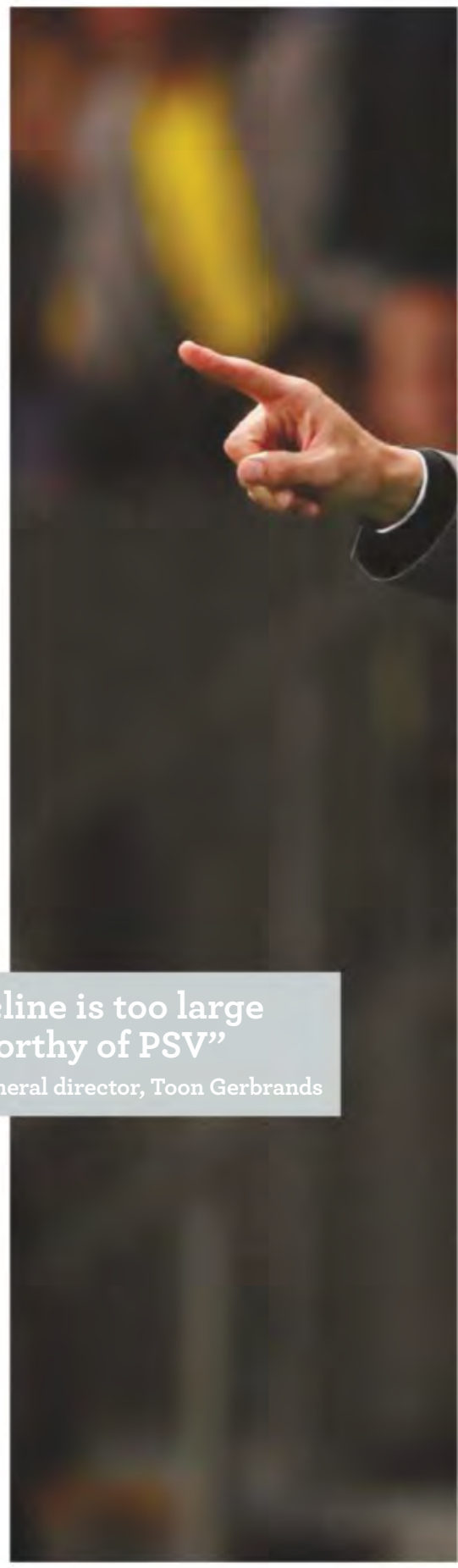
The Eindhoven club isn't known as a coaches' graveyard, with the last boss to get his marching orders being Fred Rutten in 2012. However, general director Toon Gerbrands eventually felt he had no other option, explaining: "The decline is too large and unworthy of PSV."

When Van Bommel was sacked PSV had won only two of their previous 12 games in all competitions and had slumped to fourth place in the Eredivisie, 10 points adrift of leaders AZ and Ajax. The Eindhoven side had also been eliminated in the Champions League qualifiers and then knocked out of the Europa League following heavy defeats against LASK and Sporting.

The axe finally fell after a 3-1 defeat at Feyenoord, who had themselves just replaced Jaap Stam with Dick Advocaat. Yet it had all started so well for Van Bommel in the summer of 2018.

Despite lacking any coaching experience at senior level PSV opted to promote him from the youth section with the idea that he could walk the same path as his predecessor Phillip Cocu, who as a rookie coach served for six years and won three championships and one national cup. And was there a better candidate than the former PSV captain who won four titles and the cup in nearly 200 matches?

New No1... Lars Unnerstall


Argumentative ...Van Bommel's relationship with referees did not go down well

> "The decline is too large and unworthy of PSV"
> The club's general director, Toon Gerbrands

A super-charged start saw PSV win 16 of their first 17 league games last season, a run that put them in pole position at the winter break. The joy, however, didn't last long. Their lead faded and Van Bommel made crucial mistakes – such as continuing with three defensive midfielders against an Ajax side who had been reduced to 10 men. A 3-1 defeat in that game meant their championship hopes were over.

On top of that, Van Bommel also had a difficult relationship with his side's star forward, Hirving Lozano. However, with the Mexican departing for Napoli last summer, Van Bommel could look forward to a fresh start in 2019-20.

But the club made some awful mistakes in the transfer market, with defenders Toni Lato (on loan from Valencia), Olivier Boscagli (Nice), Timo Baumgartl and the returning Daniel Schwaab (both

Stuttgart) not up to the required standard. Initially, free-scoring strikers Donyell Malen and Steven Bergwijn were able to hide that weakness, but when they both got injured defeats were unavoidable.

And it was not only the results that cost Van Bommel his job, with his behaviour – and in particularly his constant arguing with referees – not what the PSV board had in mind.

Then there were his rookie mistakes in relationships with players. For instance, he demoted goalkeeper Jeroen Zoet in favour of Lars Unnerstall without consulting him. Away at Willem II, Zoet was warming up when Van Bommel decided that he should go to the stands as a non-playing reserve rather than being on the bench as the back-up keeper. Midway through the match – which PSV lost 2-1 – he ordered Zoet to take a seat on the team bus to avoid any difficult questions from the press, leaving the Holland international furious that he was suddenly the club's third choice.

Gone...Feyenoord boss Jaap Stam (left)

PSV weren't the only ones to dismiss their coach before the winter break, with VVV Venlo (Robert Maaskant replaced by Hans De Koning), Vitesse (Leonid Slutsky replaced by Edward Sturing), ADO Den Haag (Fons Groenendijk replaced by Alan Pardew) and Feyenoord (Stam replaced by Advocaat) all making changes in the dugout.

Stam's reign in Rotterdam only lasted 120 days and 18 matches but he claims he had wanted to quit even before the season started. With technical director Martin Van Geel and general director Jan De Jong – the people who signed Stam – being pushed to the exit, he felt that he had little support. Nor was he helped by the fact Feyenoord had no board left to take decisions and the cash-strapped club couldn't sign the players he needed. After a 4-0 loss to Ajax, Stam thought enough was enough and resigned. WS

CAF Champions League

MARK GLEESON

Leading the way

Mazembe and Mamelodi Sundowns are first to qualify for quarter-finals

The two teams mostly likely to end the North African hegemony in the CAF Champions League were the first two teams to qualify for the quarter-finals, as TP Mazembe Englebert of DR Congo and South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns led the way in the group phase of the 2019-20 competition.

Mazembe were guaranteed a top-two finish in Group A after collecting 10 points from their opening four group games, with Zamalek of Egypt looking odds-on to join them.

Sundowns have 10 points in Group C and are likely to be joined by Wydad of Morocco, their perennial rivals who they have played against

in each of the last four tournaments.

Mazembe, who last won the Champions League in 2015, were watched by their new Serbian technical director Dragan Cvetkovic as they came from behind to beat Angola's Primeiro Agosto 2-1 and extend their four-year unbeaten home record to 48 games.

Winners in 2016, Sundowns also won 2-1 on home soil, beating USM Alger, but they still have to entertain Wydad in a game that is likely to decide who finishes top and gets a more favourable pairing when the last-eight draw is made in Cairo on February 9.

Since 2016, North African clubs have stood on the winners' podium, with Wydad winning in 2017 and Tunisia's Esperance triumphing for the last two editions. In total, clubs from the Arabic-speaking north have won 31 of 55 past Champions Cup/Champions League titles.

Qualified... Andile Jali of Mamelodi Sundowns (in yellow)

Esperance and Al Ahly of Egypt both reached a milestone in mid-January, each playing their 100th game in the group phase of the Champions League since it was first introduced to Africa in 1997.

Esperance are well set in Group D after winning away at Raja of Casablanca in their first group game in December and then against AS Vita Club of DR Congo in January. However, qualification has not yet been secured and they still need a point from their last two games.

Al Ahly have won more titles than any other club in African Champions League history but getting through Group B is proving no easy matter.

After four rounds they trailed Etoile Sahel of Tunisia, who had nine points, and they were just one ahead of Sudan's Al Hilal, who had six. Ahly must still go to Khartoum for a likely showdown in their final group game after dropping points away at FC Platinum, who held them 1-1 in Bulawayo where Marwan Mohsen's goal rescued a share of the spoils.

The dates for the new-look Finals of both the Champions League and African Confederation Cup will be played at the end of May.

The Confederation of African Football have chosen to introduce a single Final at a neutral venue for the first time for both competitions and have fixed the Confederation Cup Final for Sunday May 24 and the Champions League Final on the following Friday, May 29.

The venues are yet to be settled as CAF takes a major risk in hoping there will be enough neutral interest to watch the games.

The announcement of the dates follows a massive overhaul to the fixture list for the rest of this season's club competitions.

The decision to host the African Nations Championship (CHAN) in Cameroon in April

> **The Final venues are yet to be settled as CAF takes a major risk in hoping there will be enough neutral interest to watch the games**

means the group phase of both the Champions League and Confederation Cup will now be squashed into just two months.

No club competition matches can be played at the same time as the CHAN 2020 tournament from April 4 to 25, so the programme for the club competitions has had to change.

The final three matchdays, set for February and March, have now been crammed into January and the first two days of February.

The quarter-finals draw is being brought forward a full month and the knockout phase now commences at the end of February rather than in April as had been previously scheduled.

By the time the CHAN 2020 tournament starts, the two club competitions will be down to their last four competitors.

The two legs of the semi-finals now take place over the first two weekends of May. WS

Lead...Etoile Sahel (in red) top Group B after four games

➤ director Eric Abidal and chief executive Oscar Grau over the weekend, before reportedly rejecting their offer and remaining in charge of Qatari side Al Sadd.

TURKEY: Juventus defender Merih Demiral will undergo surgery after suffering an anterior cruciate ligament injury against Roma in Serie A at the weekend. With the recovery time for such an injury between four and six months, the 21-year-old looks likely to miss the summer's Euro finals.

Tuesday January 14

AUSTRALIA: Macarthur FC announce international midfielder Tommy Oar will be their first-ever signing and he will join the A-League's newest club from Central Coast Mariners for the 2020-21 campaign.

USA: DC United pay a club record fee of $5m to sign Peru midfielder Edison Flores from Mexican side Monarcas Morelia.

Holders...Algeria's Riyad Mahrez with the Africa Cup of Nations trophy

Wednesday January 15

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS: The 2021 finals in Cameroon will now take place between January 9 and February 6 after the tournament was moved from June and July due to weather conditions at that time of year in the country.

AUSTRALIA: Melbourne Victory sack coach Marco Kurz after just 13 A-League matches following the side's worst-ever start to a league campaign, with two wins and nine points from the first 10 games. Assistant coach Carlos Salvachua is put in charge for the rest of the season.

JAPAN: Kazuyoshi Miura, who turns 53 in February, agrees a deal to play for another season in the top-flight J1 League. "I was able to renew my contract with Yokohama FC in the 2020 season," he says. "I'll do my best to contribute." WS

Club football

WORLD

CLUB WORLD CUP

Played in Doha, Qatar

1st round

Dec11
Al Sadd (Qat) 3 (Bounedjah 26, Hassan 100, Pedro Miguel 114)
Hienghene Sport (NwC) 1 (Roine 46)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 7,047.
Ref: Ghorbal (Alg)

2nd round

Dec14
Al Hilal (Sau) 1 (Gomis 73)
Esperance Tunis (Tun) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,726. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)
Sent off: Kanno (Al Hilal) 85

Dec14
Monterrey (Mex) 3 (Vangioni 23, Funes Mori 45+1, Rodriguez 77)
Al Sadd 2 (Bounedjah 66, Hassan 89)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 4,878. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)

● *The losing teams went into the 5th-place match*

5th-place match

Dec17
Al Sadd 2 (Bounedjah pen 32, Al Haidos pen 49)
Esperance Tunis 6 (Elhouni 6, 42, 74, Badri 13, pen 25, Derbali 87)
HT: 1-4. **Att:** 15,037. **Ref:** Zitouni (Tah)
Sent off: Hassan (Al Sadd) 24

Semi-finals

Dec17
Flamengo (Bra) 3 (De Arrascaeta 49, Bruno Henrique 78, Al Bulaihi og 82)
Al Hilal 1 (Al Dawsari 18)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 21,588. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)
Flamengo: Diego Alves - Rafinha, Rodrigo Caio, Mari, Filipe Luis, Willian Arao, Gerson (Diego 74), Everton Ribeiro, De Arrascaeta (Piris Da Motta 90+3), Bruno Henrique (Vitinho 89), Gabriel Barbosa.
Al Hilal: Al Maiouf - Al Burayk, Jang, Al Bulaihi, Al Shahrani, Carlos Eduardo, Cuellar, Carrillo, Giovinco (Khribin 71), Al Dawsari (Al Abed 82), Gomis (Otayf 90+2). *Sent off: Carrillo 83.*

Dec18
Monterrey 1 (Funes Mori 14)
Liverpool (Eng) 2 (Keita 12, Roberto Firmino 90+1)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 45,416. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)
Monterrey: Barovero - Medina, Montes (Layun 79), Sanchez, Vangioni, Gallardo, Pabon (Meza 82), Rodriguez, Ortiz, Pizarro (J Gonzalez 90), Funes Mori.
Liverpool: Alisson - Milner (Alexander-Arnold 74), Gomez, Henderson, Robertson, Oxlade-Chamberlain, Lallana, Keita, Salah, Origi (Roberto Firmino 85), Shaqiri (Mane 68).

3rd-place match

Dec 21
Monterrey 2 (A Gonzalez 55, Meza 60)
Al Hilal 2 (Carlos Eduardo 35, Gomis 66)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,318. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Monterrey 4-3 on pens

Final

Dec 21
Liverpool 1 (Roberto Firmino 99)
Flamengo 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Att:** 45,416.
Ref: Al Jassim (Qat)
Liverpool: Alisson - Alexander-Arnold, Gomez, Van Dijk, Robertson, Keita (Milner 100), Henderson, Oxlade-Chamberlain (Lallana 75), Salah (Shaqiri 120+1), Roberto Firmino (Origi 105), Mane.
Flamengo: Diego Alves - Rafinha, Rodrigo Caio, Mari, Filipe Luis, Gerson (Lincoln 102), Willian Arao (Berrio 120), De Arrascaeta (Vitinho 77), Everton Ribeiro (Diego 82), Bruno Henrique, Gabriel Barbosa.

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Sep18
Club Brugge (Blg) 0
Galatasaray (Tur) 0
Att: 26,616. **Ref:** Vincic (Sln)

Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 3 (Di Maria 14, 33, Meunier 90+1)
Real Madrid (Spa) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 46,361. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

Oct1
Galatasaray 0
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Icardi 52)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 46,532. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)

Real Madrid 2 (Sergio Ramos 55, Casemiro 85)
Club Brugge 2 (Dennis 9, 39)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 65,112. **Ref:** Kabakov (Bul)
Sent off: Vormer (Club Brugge) 84

Oct 22
Club Brugge 0
Paris Saint-Germain 5 (Icardi 7, 63, Mbappe 61, 79, 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,946. **Ref:** Siebert (Ger)

Galatasaray 0
Real Madrid 1 (Kroos 18)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 48,886. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Nov 6
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Icardi 22)
Club Brugge 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 47,418. **Ref:** Madden (Sco)

Real Madrid 6 (Rodrygo 4, 7, 90+2, Sergio Ramos pen 14, Benzema 45, 81)
Galatasaray 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 65,492. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)

Nov 26
Galatasaray 1 (Adem Buyuk 11)
Club Brugge 1 (Diatta 90+2)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 34,500. **Ref:** Kruzliak (Slk)
Sent off: Diatta 90+3, Mata 90+3 (both Club Brugge)

Real Madrid 2 (Benzema 17, 79)
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Mbappe 81, Sarabia 83)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 75,534. **Ref:** Dias (Por)

Dec11
Club Brugge 1 (Vanaken 55)
Real Madrid 3 (Rodrygo 53, Vinicius Junior 64, Modric 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,308. **Ref:** Stieler (Ger)

Paris Saint-Germain 5 (Icardi 32, Sarabia 35, Neymar 46, Mbappe 63, Cavani pen 84)
Galatasaray 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 46,509. **Ref:** Kovacs (Rom)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSG (Q)	6	5	1	0	17	2	16
R Madrid (Q)	6	3	2	1	14	8	11
C Brugge (EL)	6	0	3	3	4	12	3
Galatasaray	6	0	2	4	1	14	2

Group B

Sep18
Bayern Munich (Ger) 3 (Coman 34, Lewandowski 80, Muller 90+1)
Red Star Belgrade (Ser) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Madden (Sco)

Olympiakos (Gre) 2 (Podence 44, Valbuena pen 54)
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 2 (Kane pen 26, Lucas Moura 30)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 31,001. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)

Oct1
Red Star Belgrade 3 (Vulic 62, Milunovic 87, Boakye 90)
Olympiakos 1 (Ruben Semedo 37)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 43,291. **Ref:** Bastien (Fra)
Sent off: Benzia (Olympiakos) 58

Tottenham Hotspur 2 (Son 12, Kane pen 61)
Bayern Munich 7 (Kimmich 15, Lewandowski 45, 87, Gnabry 53, 55, 83, 88)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 60,127. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Oct 22
Olympiakos 2 (El Arabi 23, Guilherme 79)
Bayern Munich 3 (Lewandowski 34, 62, Tolisso 75)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 31,670. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)

Tottenham Hotspur 5 (Kane 9, 72, Son 16, 44, Lamela 57)
Red Star Belgrade 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 51,743. **Ref:** Guida (Ita)

Nov 6
Bayern Munich 2 (Lewandowski 69, Perisic 89)
Olympiakos 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 63,646. **Ref:** Raczkowski (Pol)

Red Star Belgrade 0
Tottenham Hotspur 4 (Lo Celso 34, Son 57, 61, Eriksen 85)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 42,381. **Ref:** Del Cerro Grande (Spa)

Nov 26
Red Star Belgrade 0
Bayern Munich 6 (Goretzka 14, Lewandowski pen 53, 60, 64, 68, Tolisso 89)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 44,118. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)

Tottenham Hotspur 4 (Alli 45+1, Kane 50, 77, Aurier 73)
Olympiakos 2 (El Arabi 6, Ruben Semedo 19)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 57,024. **Ref:** Kabakov (Bul)

Dec11
Bayern Munich 3 (Coman 14, Muller 45, Philippe Coutinho 64)
Tottenham Hotspur 1 (Sessegnon 20)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 66,353. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)

Olympiakos 1 (El Arabi pen 87)
Red Star Belgrade 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 31,898. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern M (Q)	6	6	0	0	24	5	18
Tottenham (Q)	6	3	1	2	18	14	10
Olympiakos (EL)	6	1	1	4	8	14	4
Red Star B	6	1	0	5	3	20	3

Group C

Sep18
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 4 (Leovac 10, Orsic 31, 42, 68)
Atalanta (Ita) 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 28,863. **Ref:** Gil Manzano (Spa)

Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 0
Manchester City (Eng) 3 (Mahrez 24, Gundogan 38, Gabriel Jesus 76)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 36,675. **Ref:** Dias (Por)

Oct1
Atalanta 1 (Zapata 28)
Shakhtar Donetsk 2 (Junior Moraes 41, Solomon 90+5)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 26,022. **Ref:** Stieler (Ger)

Manchester City 2 (Sterling 66, Foden 90+5)
Dinamo Zagreb 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 49,046. **Ref:** Gozubuyuk (Hol)

Oct 22
Manchester City 5 (Aguero 34, pen 38, Sterling 58, 64, 69)
Atalanta 1 (Malinovskyi pen 28)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 49,308. **Ref:** Grinfeld (Isr)
Sent off: Foden (Manchester City) 83

Shakhtar Donetsk 2 (Konoplyanka 16, Dodo 75)
Dinamo Zagreb 2 (Olmo 25, Orsic pen 60)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 21,526. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

Nov 6
Atalanta 1 (Pasalic 49)
Manchester City 1 (Sterling 7)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 34,326. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)
Sent off: Bravo (Manchester City) 81

Dinamo Zagreb 3 (Petkovic 25, Ivanusec 83, Ademi 89)
Shakhtar Donetsk 3 (Alan Patrick 13, Junior Moraes 90+3, Tete pen 90+8)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 28,316. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Sent off: Moro (Dinamo Zagreb) 74; Marlos (Shakhtar Donetsk) 79

Nov 26
Atalanta 2 (Muriel pen 27, Gomez 47)
Dinamo Zagreb 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,365. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)

Manchester City 1 (Gundogan 56)
Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Solomon 69)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 52,020. **Ref:** Vincic (Sln)

Dec11
Dinamo Zagreb 1 (Olmo 10)
Manchester City 4 (Gabriel Jesus 34, 50, 54, Foden 84)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 29,385. **Ref:** Del Cerro Grande (Spa)

Shakhtar Donetsk 0
Atalanta 3 (Castagne 66, Pasalic 80, Gosens 90+4)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 26,536. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)
Sent off: Dodo (Shakhtar Donetsk) 77

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City (Q)	6	4	2	0	16	4	14
Atalanta (Q)	6	2	1	3	8	12	7
Shakhtar (EL)	6	1	3	2	8	13	6
Dinamo Z	6	1	2	3	10	13	5

Group D

Sep18
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 2 (Savic 70, Herrera 90)
Juventus (Ita) 2 (Cuadrado 48, Matuidi 65)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 66,283. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)

Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 1 (Howedes og 25)
Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 2 (Krychowiak 16, Barinov 37)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 26,592. **Ref:** Raczkowski (Pol)

Oct1
Juventus 3 (Higuain 17, Bernardeschi 62, Cristiano Ronaldo 89)
Bayer Leverkusen 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 34,525. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)

Lokomotiv Moscow 0
Atletico Madrid 2 (Joao Felix 48, Partey 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,051. **Ref:** Grinfeld (Isr)

Oct 22
Atletico Madrid 1 (Morata 78)
Bayer Leverkusen 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 56,776. **Ref:** Dias (Por)

Juventus 2 (Dybala 77, 79)
Lokomotiv Moscow 1 (Aleksei Miranchuk 30)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 38,547. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)

Nov 6
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Partey og 41, Volland 55)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Morata 90+4)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,160. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Sent off: Amiri (Bayer Leverkusen) 84

Lokomotiv Moscow 1 (Aleksei Miranchuk 12)
Juventus 2 (Ramsey 4, Douglas Costa 90+3)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 26,861. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)

Nov 26
Juventus 1 (Dybala 45+2)
Atletico Madrid 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,486. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

Lokomotiv Moscow 0
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Zhemaletdinov og 11, S Bender 54)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 25,757. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)

Dec11
Atletico Madrid 2 (Joao Felix pen 17, Felipe 54)
Lokomotiv Moscow 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 58,426. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)

Bayer Leverkusen 0
Juventus 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 75, Higuain 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,542. **Ref:** Bastien (Fra)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus (Q)	6	5	1	0	12	4	16
Atl Madrid (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
Leverkusen (EL)	6	2	0	4	5	9	6
Lokomotiv M	6	1	0	5	4	11	3

Group E

Sep17
Napoli (Ita) 2 (Mertens pen 82, Llorente 90+2)
Liverpool (Eng) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 38,878. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Salzburg (Aut) 6 (Haaland 2, 34, 45, Hwang 36, Szoboszlai 45+2, Ulmer 66)
Genk 2 (Lucumi 40, Samatta 52)
HT: 5-1. **Att:** 29,520. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)

Oct 2
Genk 0
Napoli 0
Att: 19,962. **Ref:** Kovacs (Rom)

Liverpool 4 (Mane 9, Robertson 25, Salah 36, 69)
Salzburg 3 (Hwang 39, Minamino 56, Haaland 60)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 52,243. **Ref:** Ekberg (Swe)

Oct 23
Genk 1 (Odey 88)
Liverpool 4 (Oxlade-Chamberlain 2, 57, Mane 77, Salah 87)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,626. **Ref:** Vincic (Sln)

Salzburg 2 (Haaland pen 40, 72)
Napoli 3 (Mertens 17, 64, Insigne 73)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 29,520. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Nov 5
Liverpool 2 (Wijnaldum 14, Oxlade-Chamberlain 53)
Genk 1 (Samatta 41)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 52,611. **Ref:** Kruzliak (Slk)

Napoli 1 (Lozano 44)
Salzburg 1 (Haaland pen 11)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 32,862. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)

Nov 27
Genk 1 (Samatta 85)
Salzburg 4 (Daka 43, Minamino 45, Hwang 69, Haaland 87)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 17,284. **Ref:** Gestranius (Fin)

Liverpool 1 (Lovren 65)
Napoli 1 (Mertens 21)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 52,128. **Ref:** Del Cerro Grande (Spa)

Dec10
Napoli 4 (Milik 3, 26, pen 38, Mertens pen 75)
Genk 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 22,265. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)

Salzburg 0
Liverpool 2 (Keita 57, Salah 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,520. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool (Q)	6	4	1	1	13	8	13
Napoli (Q)	6	3	3	0	11	4	12
Salzburg (EL)	6	2	1	3	16	13	7
Genk	6	0	1	5	5	20	1

Group F

Sep17
Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 0
Barcelona (Spa) 0
Att: 66,099. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)

Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Barella 90+2)
Slavia Prague (CzR) 1 (Olayinka 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,128. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)

Oct 2
Barcelona 2 (Suarez 58, 84)
Internazionale 1 (Martinez 3)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 86,141. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)

Slavia Prague 0
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Hakimi 35, 89)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,370. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)

Oct 23
Internazionale 2 (Martinez 22, Candreva 89)
Borussia Dortmund 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 65,673. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

Slavia Prague 1 (Boril 50)
Barcelona 2 (Messi 3, Olayinka og 57)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,170. **Ref:** Madden (Sco)

Nov 5
Barcelona 0
Slavia Prague 0
Att: 67,023. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Hakimi 51, 77, Brandt 64)
Internazionale 2 (Martinez 5, Vecino 40)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 66,099. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)

Nov 27
Barcelona 3 (Suarez 29, Messi 33, Griezmann 67)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Sancho 77)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 90,071. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Slavia Prague 1 (Soucek pen 37)
Internazionale 3 (Martinez 19, 88, Lukaku 81)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 19,370. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)

Dec10
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Sancho 10, Brandt 61)
Slavia Prague 1 (Soucek 43)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 65,079. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)
Sent off: Weigl (Borussia Dortmund) 77

Internazionale 1 (Lukaku 44)
Barcelona 2 (Perez 23, Fati 86)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 71,818. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona (Q)	6	4	2	0	9	4	14
Dortmund (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Inter (EL)	6	2	1	3	10	9	7
Slavia Prague	6	0	2	4	4	10	2

Group G

Sep17
Benfica (Por) 1 (Seferovic 84)
RB Leipzig (Ger) 2 (Werner 69, 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 46,460. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)

Lyon (Fra) 1 (Depay pen 51)
Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 1 (Azmoun 41)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 47,201. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)

Oct 2
RB Leipzig 0
Lyon 2 (Depay 11, Terrier 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,194. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

Zenit St Petersburg 3 (Dzyuba 22, Ruben Dias og 70, Azmoun 78)
Benfica 1 (De Tomas 85)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,683. **Ref:** Del Cerro Grande (Spa)

Oct 23
Benfica 2 (Rafa Silva 4, Pizzi 86)
Lyon 1 (Depay 70)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 53,035. **Ref:** Kruzliak (Slk)

RB Leipzig 2 (Laimer 49, Sabitzer 59)
Zenit St Petersburg 1 (Rakitskyi 25)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 41,058. **Ref:** Palabiyik (Tur)

Nov 5
Lyon 3 (Andersen 4, Depay 33, Traore 89)
Benfica 1 (Seferovic 76)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 51,077. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)

Zenit St Petersburg 0
RB Leipzig 2 (Demme 45+5, Sabitzer 63)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,452. **Ref:** Grinfeld (Isr)

Nov 27
RB Leipzig 2 (Forsberg pen 90, 90+6)
Benfica 2 (Pizzi 20, Carlos Vinicius 59)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 38,339. **Ref:** Gil Manzano (Spa)

Zenit St Petersburg 2 (Dzyuba 42, Ozdoev 84)
Lyon 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,183. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Dec10
Benfica 3 (Cervi 47, Pizzi pen 58, Azmoun og 79)
Zenit St Petersburg 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,232. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)
Sent off: Douglas Santos (Zenit St Petersburg) 56

Lyon 2 (Aouar 50, Depay 82)
RB Leipzig 2 (Forsberg pen 9, Werner pen 33)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 53,288. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
RB Leipzig (Q)	6	3	2	1	10	8	11
Lyon (Q)	6	2	2	2	9	8	8
Benfica (EL)	6	2	1	3	10	11	7
Zenit St P	6	2	1	3	7	9	7

Group H

Sep17
Ajax (Hol) 3 (Promes 18, Alvarez 50, Tagliafico 62)
Lille (Fra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,441. **Ref:** Jovanovic (Ser)

Chelsea (Eng) 0
Valencia (Spa) 1 (Rodrigo 74)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 39,469. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)

Oct 2
Lille 1 (Osimhen 33)
Chelsea 2 (Abraham 22, Willian 78)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 48,523. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)

Valencia 0
Ajax 3 (Ziyech 8, Promes 34, Van de Beek 67)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 44,659. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Oct 23
Ajax 0
Chelsea 1 (Batshuayi 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 52,482. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)

Lille 1 (Ikone 90+5)
Valencia 1 (Cheryshev 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 47,488. **Ref:** Aytekin (Ger)
Sent off: Diakhaby (Valencia) 84

Nov 5
Chelsea 4 (Jorginho pen 5, pen 71, Azpilicueta 63, James 74)
Ajax 4 (Abraham og 2, Promes 20, Kepa og 35, Van de Beek 55)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 39,132. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)
Sent off: Blind 68, Veltman 69 (both Ajax)

Valencia 4 (Dani Parejo pen 66, Soumaoro og 82, Kondogbia 84, Torres 90)
Lille 1 (Osimhen 25)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 38,252. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)

Nov 27
Lille 0
Ajax 2 (Ziyech 2, Promes 59)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 48,612. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Valencia 2 (Soler 40, Wass 82)
Chelsea 2 (Kovacic 41, Pulisic 50)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 43,486. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)

Dec10
Ajax 0
Valencia 1 (Rodrigo 24)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 51,931. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)
Sent off: Gabriel (Valencia) 90+3

Chelsea 2 (Abraham 19, Azpilicueta 35)
Lille 1 (Remy 78)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,016. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valencia (Q)	6	3	2	1	9	7	11
Chelsea (Q)	6	3	2	1	11	9	11
Ajax (EL)	6	3	1	2	12	6	10
Lille	6	0	1	5	4	14	1

● *The top 2 in each group have qualified for the round of16; the 3rd-placed teams enter the Europa League at the round of 32 stage*

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group stage results & final tables

Group A

Sep 19: APOEL (Cyp) 3 F91 Dudelange (Lux) 4; Qarabag (Aze) 0 Sevilla (Spa) 3. **Oct 3:** F91 Dudelange 1 Qarabag 4; Sevilla 1 APOEL 0. **Oct 24:** Qarabag 2 APOEL 2; Sevilla 3 F91 Dudelange 0. **Nov 7:** APOEL 2 Qarabag 1; F91 Dudelange 2 Sevilla 5. **Nov 28:** F91 Dudelange 0 APOEL 2; Sevilla 2 Qarabag 0. **Dec 12:** APOEL 1 Sevilla 0; Qarabag 1 F91 Dudelange 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sevilla (Q)	6	5	0	1	14	3	15
APOEL (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	8	10
Qarabag	6	1	2	3	8	11	5
Dudelange	6	1	1	4	8	18	4

Group B

Sep 19: Copenhagen (Den) 1 Lugano (Swi) 0; Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 1 Malmo (Swe) 0. **Oct 3:** Lugano 0 Dynamo Kiev 0; Malmo 1 Copenhagen 1. **Oct 24:** Dynamo Kiev 1 Copenhagen 1; Malmo 2 Lugano 1. **Nov 7:** Copenhagen 1 Dynamo Kiev 1; Lugano 0 Malmo 0. **Nov 28:** Lugano 0 Copenhagen 1; Malmo 4 Dynamo Kiev 3. **Dec 12:** Copenhagen 0 Malmo 1; Dynamo Kiev 1 Lugano 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Malmo (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
Copenhagen (Q)	6	2	3	1	5	4	9
Dynamo Kiev	6	1	4	1	7	7	7
Lugano	6	0	3	3	2	5	3

Group C

Sep 19: Basle (Swi) 5 Krasnodar (Rus) 0; Getafe (Spa) 1 Trabzonspor (Tur) 0. **Oct 3:** Krasnodar 1 Getafe 2; Trabzonspor 2 Basle 2. **Oct 24:** Getafe 0 Basle 1; Trabzonspor 0 Krasnodar 2. **Nov 7:** Basle 2 Getafe 1; Krasnodar 3 Trabzonspor 1. **Nov 28:** Krasnodar 1 Basle 0; Trabzonspor 0 Getafe 1. **Dec 12:** Basle 2 Trabzonspor 0; Getafe 3 Krasnodar 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle (Q)	6	4	1	1	12	4	13
Getafe (Q)	6	4	0	2	8	4	12
Krasnodar	6	3	0	3	7	11	9
Trabzonspor	6	0	1	5	3	11	1

Group D

Sep 19: LASK Linz (Aut) 1 Rosenborg (Nor) 0; PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 3 Sporting Lisbon (Por) 2. **Oct 3:** Rosenborg 1 PSV 4; Sporting Lisbon 2 LASK Linz 1. **Oct 24:** PSV 0 LASK Linz 0; Sporting Lisbon 1 Rosenborg 0. **Nov 7:** LASK Linz 4 PSV 1; Rosenborg 0 Sporting Lisbon 2. **Nov 28:** Rosenborg 1 LASK Linz 2; Sporting Lisbon 4 PSV 0. **Dec 12:** LASK Linz 3 Sporting Lisbon 0; PSV 1 Rosenborg 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LASK Linz (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	4	13
Sporting L (Q)	6	4	0	2	11	7	12
PSV	6	2	2	2	9	12	8
Rosenborg	6	0	1	5	3	11	1

Group E

Sep 19: CFR Cluj (Rom) 2 Lazio (Ita) 1; Rennes (Fra) 1 Celtic (Sco) 1.
Oct 3: Celtic 2 CFR Cluj 0; Lazio 2 Rennes 1.
Oct 24: Celtic 2 Lazio 1; Rennes 0 CFR Cluj 1.
Nov 7: CFR Cluj 1 Rennes 0; Lazio 1 Celtic 2.
Nov 28: Celtic 3 Rennes 1; Lazio 1 CFR Cluj 0.
Dec 12: CFR Cluj 2 Celtic 0; Rennes 2 Lazio 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic (Q)	6	4	1	1	10	6	13
CFR Cluj (Q)	6	4	0	2	6	4	12
Lazio	6	2	0	4	6	9	6
Rennes	6	1	1	4	5	8	4

Group F

Sep 19: Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger) 0 Arsenal (Eng) 3; Standard Liege (Blg) 2 Vitoria Guimaraes (Por) 0. **Oct 3:** Arsenal 4 Standard Liege 0; Vitoria G 0 Eintracht Frankfurt 1. **Oct 24:** Arsenal 3 Vitoria G 2; Eintracht Frankfurt 2 Standard Liege 1. **Nov 6:** Vitoria G 1 Arsenal 1. **Nov 7:** Standard Liege 2 Eintracht Frankfurt 1. **Nov 28:** Arsenal 1 Eintracht Frankfurt 2; Vitoria G 1 Standard Liege 1. **Dec 12:** Eintracht Frankfurt 2 Vitoria G 3; Standard Liege 2 Arsenal 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal (Q)	6	3	2	1	14	7	11
Eintracht F (Q)	6	3	0	3	8	10	9
Standard L	6	2	2	2	8	10	8
Vitoria G	6	1	2	3	7	10	5

Group G

Sep 19: Porto (Por) 2 Young Boys (Swi) 1; Rangers (Sco) 1 Feyenoord (Hol) 0. **Oct 3:** Feyenoord 2 Porto 0; Young Boys 2 Rangers 1. **Oct 24:** Porto 1 Rangers 1; Young Boys 2 Feyenoord 0. **Nov 7:** Feyenoord 1 Young Boys 1; Rangers 2 Porto 0. **Nov 28:** Feyenoord 2 Rangers 2; Young Boys 1 Porto 2. **Dec 12:** Porto 3 Feyenoord 2; Rangers 1 Young Boys 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
Rangers (Q)	6	2	3	1	8	6	9
Young Boys	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Feyenoord	6	1	2	3	7	9	5

Group H

Sep 19: Espanyol (Spa) 1 Ferencvaros (Hun) 1; Ludogorets (Bul) 5 CSKA Moscow (Rus) 1. **Oct 3:** CSKA Moscow 0 Espanyol 2; Ferencvaros 0 Ludogorets 3. **Oct 24:** CSKA Moscow 0 Ferencvaros 1; Ludogorets 0 Espanyol 1. **Nov 7:** Espanyol 6 Ludogorets 0; Ferencvaros 0 CSKA Moscow 0. **Nov 28:** CSKA Moscow 1 Ludogorets 1; Ferencvaros 2 Espanyol 2. **Dec 12:** Espanyol 0 CSKA Moscow 1; Ludogorets 1 Ferencvaros 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Espanyol (Q)	6	3	2	1	12	4	11
Ludogorets (Q)	6	2	2	2	10	10	8
Ferencvaros	6	1	4	1	5	7	7
CSKA M	6	1	2	3	3	9	5

Group I

Sep 19: Gent (Blg) 3 Saint-Etienne (Fra) 2; Wolfsburg (Ger) 3 Oleksandriya (Ukr) 1.

Oct 3: Oleksandriya 1 Gent 1; Saint-Etienne 1 Wolfsburg 1. **Oct 24:** Gent 2 Wolfsburg 2; Saint-Etienne 1 Oleksandriya 1. **Nov 7:** Oleksandriya 2 Saint-Etienne 2; Wolfsburg 1 Gent 3. **Nov 28:** Oleksandriya 0 Wolfsburg 1; Saint-Etienne 0 Gent 0. **Dec 12:** Gent 2 Oleksandriya 1; Wolfsburg 1 Saint-Etienne 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gent (Q)	6	3	3	0	11	7	12
Wolfsburg (Q)	6	3	2	1	9	7	11
Saint-Etienne	6	0	4	2	6	8	4
Oleksandriya	6	0	3	3	6	10	3

Group J

Sep 19: Borussia Monchengladbach (Ger) 0 Wolfsberger (Aut) 4; Roma (Ita) 4 Istanbul Basaksehir (Tur) 0. **Oct 3:** Basaksehir 1 Monchengladbach 1; Wolfsberger 1 Roma 1. **Oct 24:** Basaksehir 1 Wolfsberger 0; Roma 1 Monchengladbach 1. **Nov 7:** Monchengladbach 2 Roma 1; Wolfsberger 0 Basaksehir 3. **Nov 28:** Basaksehir 0 Roma 3; Wolfsberger 0 Monchengladbach 1. **Dec 12:** Monchengladbach 1 Basaksehir 2; Roma 2 Wolfsberger 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basaks'ir (Q)	6	3	1	2	7	9	10
Roma (Q)	6	2	3	1	12	6	9
M'gladbach	6	2	2	2	6	9	8
Wolfsberger	6	1	2	3	7	8	5

Group K

Sep 19: Slovan Bratislava (Slk) 4 Besiktas (Tur) 2; Wolverhampton Wanderers (Eng) 0 Sporting Braga (Por) 1. **Oct 3:** Besiktas 0 Wolves 1; Sporting Braga 2 Slovan Bratislava 2. **Oct 24:** Besiktas 1 Sporting Braga 2; Slovan Bratislava 1 Wolves 2. **Nov 7:** Sporting Braga 3 Besiktas 1; Wolves 1 Slovan Bratislava 0. **Nov 28:** Besiktas 2 Slovan Bratislava 1; Sporting Braga 3 Wolves 3. **Dec 12:** Slovan Bratislava 2 Sporting Braga 4; Wolves 4 Besiktas 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S Braga (Q)	6	4	2	0	15	9	14
Wolves (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
Slovan B	6	1	1	4	10	13	4
Besiktas	6	1	0	5	6	15	3

Group L

Sep 19: Manchester United (Eng) 1 Astana (Kaz) 0; Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 2 AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 2. **Oct 3:** Astana 1 Partizan Belgrade 2; AZ Alkmaar 0 Manchester United 0. **Oct 24:** AZ Alkmaar 6 Astana 0; Partizan Belgrade 0 Manchester United 1. **Nov 7:** Astana 0 AZ Alkmaar 5; Manchester United 3 Partizan Belgrade 0. **Nov 28:** Astana 2 Manchester United 1; AZ Alkmaar 2 Partizan Belgrade 2. **Dec 12:** Manchester United 4 AZ Alkmaar 0; Partizan Belgrade 4 Astana 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd (Q)	6	4	1	1	10	2	13
AZ (Q)	6	2	3	1	15	8	9
Partizan B	6	2	2	2	10	10	8
Astana	6	1	0	5	4	19	3

● *Top 2 in each group qualified for round of 32*

SOUTH AMERICA

BOLIVIA

2019 – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wilst'mann (C)	26	18	6	2	57	21	60
The Strongest	26	17	6	3	72	27	57
Bolivar	26	17	5	4	74	34	56
San Jose[1]	26	15	5	6	62	30	44
Always Ready	26	13	5	8	54	40	44
Oriente	26	11	4	11	39	43	37
Nacional	26	9	7	10	47	45	34
Blooming	26	10	3	13	34	55	33
Royal Pari	26	7	7	12	28	40	28
Aurora	26	5	9	12	24	47	24
Real Potosi[3]	25	6	3	16	35	57	21
Guabira	26	4	8	14	22	53	20
Destroyers (R)[2]	26	4	5	17	22	66	17
Sp Boys[1] (R)[3]	25	5	7	13	30	42	16

[1]6pts deducted for failing to pay debts to former players
[2]Relegated automatically as team finishing bottom of combined apertura/clausura table
[3]Sport Boys did not show for final game, at Real Potosi, and so were excluded from the league instead of going into a rel/prom play-off, as they would have as the team finishing 2nd bottom of combined apertura/clausura table

CHILE

2019 – FINAL[1]

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uni Catolica (C)	24	16	5	3	44	14	53
Colo Colo	24	11	7	6	37	30	40
Palestino	24	10	8	6	42	31	38
U La Calera	25	9	10	6	29	23	37
Coquimbo U'do	24	8	10	6	29	27	34
Huachipato	24	9	7	8	31	30	34
Audax Italiano	24	10	4	10	35	35	34
O'Higgins	24	10	4	10	34	35	34
U Espanola	25	10	4	11	32	35	34
Cobresal	25	10	4	11	31	39	34
Everton	24	7	8	9	21	24	29
Antofagasta	24	7	6	11	34	35	27
Curico Unido	24	6	8	10	36	43	26
Dep Iquique	25	6	7	12	24	40	25
Univ Chile	24	4	12	8	32	38	24
U Concepcion	24	5	8	11	23	35	23

[1]Remaining games of the 30-round programme were cancelled because of civil unrest; Universidad Catolica declared champions; no teams relegated

COLOMBIA

2019 Clausura Final

1st leg - Dec1; 2nd leg - Dec 7
Junior v America 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)

ECUADOR

2019 Championship Final

1st leg - Dec11; 2nd leg - Dec15
LDU Quito v Delfin 0-0, 0-0
(agg 0-0, Delfin 2-1 on pens)

PARAGUAY

2019 – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpia (C)	22	17	3	2	53	15	54
Libertad	22	15	3	4	35	12	48
C Porteno	22	11	4	7	42	28	37
Guarani	22	9	5	8	31	28	32
Sol America	22	8	7	7	23	22	31
Nacional	22	7	8	7	29	27	29
General Diaz	22	6	7	9	27	33	25
River Plate	22	6	6	10	18	24	24
San Lorenzo	22	5	7	10	23	36	22
Luqueno	22	5	6	11	20	37	21
Capiata (R)[1]	22	5	6	11	18	38	21
Santani (R)[1]	22	5	4	13	20	39	19

[1]Relegation determined by points-per-game average over 3 most recent seasons

PERU

2019 Championship Final

1st leg - Dec 8; 2nd leg - Dec15
Binacional v Alianza Lima 4-1, 0-2 (agg 4-3)

URUGUAY

2019 Championship Semi-final

(apertura winners Penarol v clausura winners Nacional)
Dec 15: Penarol 0 Nacional 1.
● *Nacional are champions without the need for the Final to be played, as they won this semi-final and were the team with most points in the combined apertura/clausura table (the 2 ways to gain a place in the Final)*

VENEZUELA

2019 Championship Final

1st leg - Dec11; 2nd leg - Dec15
Estudiantes v Caracas 1-1, 1-1 (aet)
(agg 2-2, Caracas 4-3 on pens)

CONCACAF

BELIZE

2019-20 Opening Final

1st leg - Dec 8; 2nd leg - Dec15
Belmopan Bandits v Verdes 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)

COSTA RICA

2019-20 Apertura Final

1st leg - Dec15; 2nd leg - Dec 21
Herediano v Alajuelense 1-0, 1-2 (aet)
(agg 2-2, Herediano 5-4 on pens)

EL SALVADOR

2019-20 Apertura Final

Dec 22: Alianza 1 FAS 0.

GUATEMALA

2019-20 Apertura Final

1st leg - Dec 26; 2nd leg - Dec 29
Antigua GFC v Municipal 0-1, 2-2 (agg 2-3)

HONDURAS

2019-20 – APERTURA PLAY-OFF STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpia	4	3	0	1	10	2	9
Motagua	4	3	0	1	10	5	9
Vida	4	1	1	2	7	11	4
UPNFM	4	1	1	2	5	9	4
Marathon	4	0	2	2	5	10	2

● *Olimpia are apertura champions without the need for the scheduled Final to be played, as they topped play-off stage and regular-season table (the 2 ways to gain a place in the Final)*

MEXICO

Apertura play-offs

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 27/28; 2nd legs - Nov 30/Dec1
America v Tigres UANL 1-2, 4-2 (agg 5-4)
Monterrey v Santos Laguna 5-2, 1-1 (agg 6-3)
Morelia v Leon 3-3, 2-1 (agg 5-4)
Necaxa v Queretaro 3-0, 3-2 (agg 6-2)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Dec 4/5; 2nd legs - Dec 7/8
Monterrey v Necaxa 2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1)
Morelia v America 2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2,
America on better regular-season record)

2019-20 Apertura Final

1st leg - Dec 26; 2nd leg - Dec 29
Monterrey v America 2-1, 1-2 (aet)
(agg 3-3, Monterrey 4-2 on pens)

NICARAGUA

2019-20 Apertura Final

1st leg - Dec15; 2nd leg - Dec 21
Managua v Real Esteli 1-0, 0-2 (aet) (agg 1-2)

PANAMA

2019-20 Apertura Final

Dec 9: Costa del Este 0 Tauro 2.

AFRICA

MALAWI

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Big Bullets (C)	30	21	7	2	62	13	70
Be Forward	30	21	6	3	55	15	69
Blue Eagles	30	15	8	7	48	34	53
Silver Strikers	30	15	8	7	40	28	53
Civil Sporting	30	13	5	12	38	32	44
Moyale B'ks	30	11	9	10	32	31	42
Kamuzu B'ks	30	11	9	10	22	22	42
TN Stars	30	12	5	13	31	40	41
Mighty Tigers	30	10	8	12	24	24	38
Karonga Utd	30	10	7	13	36	45	37
Ntopwa	30	11	2	17	41	48	35
Mzuni	30	7	11	12	27	37	32
Chitipa Utd	30	7	11	12	31	47	32
Dwangwa (R)	30	8	6	16	31	52	30
Mlatho M'la (R)	30	5	8	17	25	45	23
M Security (R)	30	4	8	18	22	52	20

MOZAMBIQUE

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Costa do Sol (C)	30	20	6	4	56	25	66
Uniao Songo	30	19	3	8	47	29	60
F'viario Ma'to	30	13	9	8	34	22	48
F'viario Beira	30	12	9	9	34	25	45
F'viario Nac'a	30	12	5	13	28	31	41
ENH Vil'kulo	30	10	11	9	29	30	41
Incomati	30	10	10	10	29	31	40
Dvo Maputo	30	10	10	10	35	29	40
Textafrica	30	11	7	12	22	30	40
LD Maputo	30	11	7	12	30	36	40
F'viario Nam'a	30	10	9	11	35	33	39
Maxaquene (R)	30	9	10	11	30	31	37
Chibuto (R)	30	11	4	15	30	34	37
Dvo Nacala (R)	30	10	7	13	31	35	37
Baia Pemba (R)	30	6	7	17	25	46	25
Textil P'ue (R)	30	4	10	16	16	44	22

SAO TOME E PRINCIPE

2019 National Championship Game

1st leg - Dec15; 2nd leg - Dec 21
Agrosport v Operarios 4-1, 0-0 (agg 4-1)

ZIMBABWE

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Platinum (C)	34	17	11	6	34	15	62
Chicken Inn	34	17	8	9	49	28	59
CAPS United	34	17	7	10	53	42	58
Ngezi Platinum	34	12	13	9	28	23	49
Manica Diam'ds	34	12	11	11	35	33	47
Highlanders	34	10	16	8	30	26	46
Triangle Utd	34	13	7	14	44	43	46
ZPC Kariba	34	12	10	12	29	31	46
Dynamos	34	9	17	8	28	28	44
Black Rhinos	34	11	11	12	26	30	44
Herentals	34	8	17	9	31	34	41
Harare City	34	11	8	15	35	39	41
Bulawayo Chfs	34	11	8	15	33	44	41
Yadah	34	10	11	13	34	46	41
Chapungu (R)	34	9	13	12	32	33	40
TelOne (R)	34	8	16	10	32	35	40
Hwange (R)	34	8	13	13	30	40	37
Mushowani (R)	34	8	9	17	36	49	33

ASIA

INDONESIA

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bali Utd (C)	34	19	7	8	48	35	64
Persebaya	34	14	12	8	57	43	54
Persipura	34	14	11	9	47	38	53
Bhayangkara	34	14	11	9	51	43	53
Madura Utd	34	15	8	11	55	44	53
Persib	34	13	12	9	49	39	51
Borneo	34	12	15	7	55	42	51
PSS	34	12	12	10	45	42	48
Arema	34	13	7	14	59	62	46
Persija	34	11	11	12	43	42	44
Persela	34	11	11	12	47	45	44
PSM	34	13	5	16	50	50	44
Barito Putera	34	11	10	13	45	51	43
PSIS	34	12	7	15	36	41	43
TIRA-Per'abo	34	10	12	12	51	57	42
Badak L (R)	34	8	9	17	35	65	33
Semen P (R)	34	7	11	16	32	45	32
Kalteng P (R)	34	8	7	19	33	54	31

TURKMENISTAN

2019 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Altyn Asyr (C)	28	19	6	3	67	25	63
Ahal	28	15	9	4	44	17	54
Sagadam	28	15	7	6	41	25	52
Kopetdag	28	11	6	11	33	37	39
Energetik	28	8	8	12	28	48	32
Asgabat FK	28	8	7	13	29	44	31
Nebitci	28	7	6	15	26	43	27
Merw	28	2	5	21	23	52	11

OCEANIA

AMERICAN SAMOA

2019 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL[1]

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pago Youth (C)	12	12	0	0	100	12	36
Utulei Youth	13	8	2	3	45	22	26
Royal Puma	12	8	1	3	57	30	25
Vaiala Tongan	12	5	4	3	34	21	19
Lion Heart	13	6	1	6	26	34	19

[1]Remaining games (teams were scheduled to play14 each in total) were cancelled because of an outbreak of measles in the country

SAMOA (Upolu Premier)

2019 – FINAL[1]

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lupe O S'ga (C)	16	14	0	2	96	15	42
Kiwi	16	13	1	2	45	15	40
Vaipuna	16	11	2	3	61	19	35
Vaitele Uta	16	10	2	4	43	19	32
Vaivase	16	9	1	6	55	34	28
Vaiusu	16	8	2	6	21	19	26
Lepea	15	7	1	7	31	22	22
Togafuafua	15	6	2	7	31	42	20
Sogi	16	5	2	9	30	43	17
Moaula Utd	16	3	2	11	21	47	11
Fa'atoia Utd	16	1	1	14	13	88	4
Moata'a	16	0	0	16	11	95	0

[1]League abandoned after16 of the 22 scheduled rounds when the government declared a state of emergency because of an outbreak of measles; Lupe Ole Soaga were declared champions

Internationals

EAST ASIAN CUP

Played in Busan, South Korea

Dec10
China 1 (Dong Xuesheng 90)
Japan 2 (Suzuki 29, Miura 70)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 800. **Ref:** Tantashev (Uzb)
China: Liu Dianzuo - Ming Tian, Mei Fang, Li Ang (Yu Dabao 70), Jiang Zhipeng, Jin Jingdao, Wang Shangyuan (Li Hang 67), Tan Long, Zhang Xizhe, Feng Jin (Cao Yunding 59), Dong Xuesheng.
Japan: Nakamura - Hatanaka, Miura, Sasaki, Hashioka (Soma 84), Ideguchi, Hashimoto, Endo, Suzuki (Tagawa 72), A Ueda, Morishima.

Dec11
South Korea 2 (Hwang In-beom 45+1, Na Sang-ho 82)
Hong Kong 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 1,070. **Ref:** Evans (Aus)
South Korea: Gu Sung-yun - Kim Tae-hwan, Kim Min-jae, Kwon Kyung-won, Park Joo-ho, Hwang In-beom, Son Jun-ho, Moon Seon-min (Yun Il-lok 62), Kim Bo-kyung (Lee Yeong-jae 84), Na Sang-ho, Kim Seung-dae (Lee Jeong-hyeop 42).
Hong Kong: Yapp Hung Fai - Tong Kin Man, Fung Hing Wa, Helio, Tsui Wang Kit, Law Tsz Chun, Cheng Siu Kwan (Beto 63), Huang Yang, Tan Chun Lok, Wong Wai (Ju Yingzhi 72), Ha (Giovane 63).

Dec14
Japan 5 (Suga 8, Tagawa 14, Ogawa 26, 45+1, 58)
Hong Kong 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 1,276. **Ref:** Yaacob (Mly)
Japan: K Osako - Watanabe, S Tanaka, Koga, Soma, Oshima, A Tanaka (Hatanaka 67), Suga, Nakagawa, Tagawa, Ogawa (A Ueda 84).
Hong Kong: Tse Tak Him - Tong Kin Man (Law Tsz Chun 46), Leung Nok Hang, Li Ngai Hoi, Tsui Wang Kit (Sun Ming Him 46), Beto, Huang Yang (Tan Chun Lok 63), Chan Siu Kwan, Ju Yingzhi, Sandro, Cheng Chin Lung.

Dec15
South Korea 1 (Kim Min-jae 13)
China 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,916. **Ref:** Bin Jahari (Sin)
South Korea: Jo Hyeon-woo - Kim Tae-hwan, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su, Lee Yeong-jae (Son Jun-ho 75), Ju Se-jong, Hwang In-beom, Na Sang-ho, Lee Jeong-hyeop (Moon Seon-min 81), Yun Il-lok (Kim In-sung 68).
China: Liu Dianzuo - Ming Tian, Mei Fang (Yang Fan 46), Yu Dabao, Jiang Zhipeng, Li Hang (Muzepper 77), Wang Shangyuan, Tan Long, Zhang Xizhe, Cao Yunding (Feng Jin 59), Dong Xuesheng.

Dec18
Hong Kong 0
China 2 (Ji Xiang 8, Zhang Xizhe pen 71)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,867. **Ref:** Pu-udom (Tha)
Hong Kong: Yapp Hung Fai - Tong Kin Man, Helio, Leung Nok Hang, Tsui Wang Kit, Cheng Siu Kwan (Chung Wai Keung 46), Wong Wai (Ha 79), Huang Yang, Tan Chun Lok, Law Tsz Chun (Cheng Chin Lung 86), Giovane.
China: Liu Dianzuo - Ji Xiang, Yu Dabao, Li Ang, Wang Shenchao, Li Hang, Muzepper (Cai Huikang 80), Wang Ziming (Tan Long 46), Zhang Xizhe, Cao Yunding (Wei Shihao 71), Dong Xuesheng.

Dec18
South Korea 1 (Hwang In-beom 28)
Japan 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 29,252. **Ref:** Tantashev (Uzb)
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Kim Tae-hwan, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su, Son Jun-ho, Ju Se-jong, Hwang In-beom, Kim In-sung (Moon Seon-min 73), Lee Jeong-hyeop (Kwon Kyung-won 90), Na Sang-ho.
Japan: Nakamura - Hashioka, Hatanaka, Miura, Sasaki, Morishima, Endo (Soma 46), Ideguchi (Oshima 62), A Tanaka, Suzuki (Nakagawa 78), A Ueda.

EAST ASIAN CUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sth Korea (C)	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Japan	3	2	0	1	7	2	6
China	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Hong Kong	3	0	0	3	0	9	0

CECAFA CUP

Played in Kampala, Uganda

Group A

Dec 7
Djibouti 0
Somalia 0
Ref: Nkurunziza (Brd)

Uganda 2 (Anukani 10, Bayo 22)
Burundi 1 (Rurasenga pen 61)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Ogwayo (Ken)

Dec 9
Burundi 0
Eritrea 1 (Kidane 45+3)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Nassoro (Zan)

Somalia 0
Uganda 2 (Okello 28, 67)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Diraneh Guedi (Dji)

Dec11
Burundi 1 (Ndikumana 14)
Djibouti 2 (Mahabeh 11, pen 71)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Ogwayo (Ken)

Eritrea 0
Uganda 2 (Kasozi 58, Kizza pen 80)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Artan (Som)

Dec13
Djibouti 0
Eritrea 3 (Abreham 10, Suleiman 66, 82)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Nkurunziza (Brd)

Burundi 0
Somalia 1 (Abdulahi 40)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Fadul (Sud)

Dec15
Somalia 0
Eritrea 0
Ref: Ogwayo (Ken)

Uganda 4 (Mutyaba pen 14, Ojera 65, Ocen 79, Anukani 81)
Djibouti 1 (Mohamed 69)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Fadul (Sud)

CECAFA CUP – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda (Q)	4	4	0	0	10	2	12
Eritrea (Q)	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Somalia	4	1	2	1	1	2	5
Djibouti	4	1	1	2	3	8	4
Burundi	4	0	0	4	2	6	0

Group B

Dec 8
Zanzibar 1 (Makame 55)
Sudan 1 (Osman 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Artan (Som)
Sent off: B Khamis (Zanzibar)

Kenya 1 (Abdallah 4)
Tanzania 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sabilla (Uga)

Dec10
Sudan 1 (Namir 30)
Kenya 2 (Abdallah 66, Wamalwa 77)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mogos Teklu (Eri)

Tanzania 1 (Nchimbi 38)
Zanzibar 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Nkurunziza (Brd)

Dec14
Kenya 1 (Wamalwa 49)
Zanzibar 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Sabilla (Uga)

Sudan 0
Tanzania 0
Ref: Diraneh Guedi (Dji)

CECAFA CUP – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kenya (Q)	3	3	0	0	4	1	9
Tanzania (Q)	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
Sudan	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Zanzibar	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

● *Top 2 in both groups qualified for semi-finals*

Semi-finals

Dec17
Kenya 1 (Wamalwa 52)
Eritrea 4 (Wamalwa og 9, Okbay 49, Gebremesqel 66, Kidane 75)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Fadul (Sud)

Uganda 1 (Bayo 86)
Tanzania 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Diraneh Guedi (Dji)

3rd-place match

Dec19
Kenya 2 (Muguna 19, Abdallah 35)
Tanzania 1 (Kamagi pen 82)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Artan (Som)

Final

Dec19
Uganda 3 (Anukani 31, Kizza 68, Madondo 88)
Eritrea 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Fadul (Sud)

FRIENDLIES

Tuesday, January 7

Jan 7 - Irvine, USA
Canada 4 (Ricketts 7, Akindele 34, Osorio 45, Bair 77)
Barbados 1 (Lashley pen 36)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Vazquez (USA)
Canada: Crepeau - Godinho, James, Miller, Adekugbe, Chapman (Nelson 67), Piette (Shome 57), Fraser (Okello 75), Osorio (Teibert 57), Ricketts (Brym 67), Akindele (Bair 71).
Barbados: Primus - Morris (Hinkson 78), Smith (Graham 75), Hill (Phillips 69), Applewhaite (Edwards 69), Harris (N Brathwaite 75), Williams, Leacock, Holligan, Jules, Lashley (Lorde 75).

Thursday, January 9

Jan 9 - Doha, Qatar
Sweden 1 (J Larsson 32)
Moldova 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Al Adba (Qat)
Sweden: Dahlberg - J Andersson, Ahmedhodzic, Danielson, A Andersson, Irandust (Kacaniklic 78), Berggren, Bojanic, J Karlsson (Tankovic 78), J Larsson (Hedlund 75), Islamovic.
Moldova: Rusu - Rata (Patras 72), Prepelita, Armas, Bogdan, Dros, Taras (Cojocari 46), Suvorov (Graur 59), Cociuc (Anton 59), Platica (Spatura 72), Ambros (Bociuc 46).

Friday, January 10

Jan10 - Irvine, USA
Canada 4 (Brym 10, Teibert 37, Didic 64, Nelson 86)
Barbados 1 (Edwards 70)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Saghafi (USA)
Canada: Crepeau - Laryea (Morgan 62), Didic, Cornelius, Bassong, Teibert (Nelson 59), Fraser (Okello 81), Piette (Shome 46), Osorio (Borges 70), Akindele (Shaffelburg 69), Brym.
Barbados: L Brathwaite - Hinkson, Phillips, Hill, Graham (Smith 66), Holligan (Williams 67), N Brathwaite, Lorde (Lashley 63), Leacock (Harris 63), Jules (Applewhaite 46), Edwards.

Sunday, January 12

Jan12 - Doha, Qatar
Sweden 1 (Hedlund 75)
Kosovo 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Al Shammari (Qat)
Sweden: Abrahamsson (Pettersson 46) - Sandberg, Da Graca (Danielson 64), Une Larsson, A Andersson (J Andersson 46), Kacaniklic, Saletros, Erlingmark (Bojanic 64), Tankovic (J Karlsson 73), Hedlund, Soder.
Kosovo: Bekaj - Thaqi, Bekteshi (Lladrovci 46), Aliti, Lirim Kastrati/D (Rashkaj 46), Shala (Veliu 46), Loshaj (Lushaku 33; Broja 64), Rashani (Manaj 84), Ibrahimaj (Baftiu 46), Bytyqi (Hoxha 46), F Kastrati (Topalli 46).

KEY TO TABLES
(Q) = qualified for next stage
(C) = champions
(R) = relegated
(EL) = enter Europa League

FEBRUARY 202 Vol 60 No 6

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PICTURES
Pictures copyright: Getty Images, Press Association Images

Thanks this issue to
Peter Neish, Dean Chillmaid

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US toll free: 1 888 313 5528
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SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES
Annual sub is for 12 months (13 issues, prices include postage) UK: £68.15 Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): 98.85 euros (airmail) USA: $144.48 (airmail) Rest of world: £99.25 (airmail)

Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster: send address changes to *World Soccer*, c/o MAIL America, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001, USA. USPS004075

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
WORLD SOCCER SUBSCRIPTIONS
PO Box 20501, 1001 NM Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +44 (0) 330 333 1113

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DECEMBER 2019

ESM XI

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Thibaut COURTOIS (Real Madrid)	4
ALISSON (Liverpool)	3
Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich)	2
Andre ONANA (Ajax)	2
Wojciech SZCZESNY (Juventus)	2
ADRIAN (Liverpool)	1
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	1
EDERSON (Manchester City)	1
Lukas HRADECKY (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Benjamin LECOMTE (Monaco)	1
Rui SILVA (Granada)	1
Tomas VACLIK (Sevilla)	1

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Caglar SOYUNCU (Leicester City)	6
Mats HUMMELS (Borussia Dortmund)	5
Milan SKRINIAR (Internazionale)	5
Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus)	4
Diego GODIN (Internazionale)	4
Achraf HAKIMI (Borussia Dortmund)	4
Benjamin PAVARD (Bayern Munich)	4
Ricardo PEREIRA (Leicester City)	4
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	4
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Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	4
Serge AURIER (Tottenham Hotspur)	3
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Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Nicolas TAGLIAFICO (Ajax)	3
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Marcel HALSTENBERG (RB Leipzig)	2
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Kalidou KOULIBALY (Napoli)	2
Clement LENGLET (Barcelona)	2
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Marcos ALONSO (Chelsea)	1
Yeray ALVAREZ (Athletic Bilbao)	1
Cristian ANSALDI (Torino)	1
Youcef ATAL (Nice)	1
Cesar AZPILICUETA (Chelsea)	1
Sven BENDER (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Juan BERNAT (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Antonio CANDREVA (Internazionale)	1
Daniel CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	1
Aurelien CHEDJOU (Amiens)	1
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DAVID LUIZ (Arsenal)	1
Simon DELI (Club Brugge)	1
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Presnel KIMPEMBE (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Robin KNOCHE (Wolfsburg)	1
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Roma)	1
Ibrahima KONATE (RB Leipzig)	1
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LUIZ FELIPE (Lazio)	1
Harry MAGUIRE (Manchester United)	1
Joel MATIP (Liverpool)	1
Ferland MENDY (Real Madrid)	1
Willi ORBAN (RB Leipzig)	1
PEPE (Porto)	1
Nelson SEMEDO (Barcelona)	1
John STONES (Manchester City)	1
Alex TELLES Porto)	1
Kyle WALKER (Manchester City)	1

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Dele ALLI (Tottenham Hotspur)	2
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Philippe COUTINHO (Bayern Munich)	2
Frenkie DE JONG (Barcelona)	2
Bruno FERNANDES (Sporting CP)	2
Emil FORSBERG (RB Leipzig)	2
Papu GOMEZ (Atalanta)	2
Amine HARIT (Schalke)	2
Mason MOUNT (Chelsea)	2
Martin ODEGAARD (Real Sociedad)	2
Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
ARTHUR (Barcelona)	1
Laszlo BENES (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	1
Santi CAZORLA (Villarreal)	1
FABINHO (Liverpool)	1
FELIPE ANDERSON (West Ham United)	1
FERNANDINHO (Manchester City)	1
Alexander GOLOVIN (Monaco)	1
Eden HAZARD (Real Madrid)	1
Jonas HOFMANN (Borussia M'gladbach)	1
N'Golo KANTE (Chelsea)	1
Naby KEITA (Liverpool)	1
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James MILNER (Liverpool)	1
Radja NAINGGOLAN (Cagliari)	1
Christopher NKUNKU (RB Leipzig)	1
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Franck RIBERY (Fiorentina)	1
Marcel SABITZER (RB Leipzig)	1
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David SILVA (Manchester City)	1
Calvin STENGS (AZ)	1
Dusan TADIC (Ajax)	1
Hans VANAKEN (Club Brugge)	1
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Marcus RASHFORD (Manchester United)	2
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	1
Dominic CALVERT-LEWIN (Everton)	1
Ansu FATI (Barcelona)	1
Alireza JAHANBAKHSH (Brighton & HA)	1
Romelu LUKAKU (Internazionale)	1
Quincy PROMES (Ajax)	1
Teemu PUKKI (Norwich City)	1
Raheem STERLING (Manchester City)	1
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	1
Adama TRAORE (Wolverhampton Wanderers)	1

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CLUB WORLD CUP 2019

AL HILAL (Sau)

GOALKEEPERS

40	Nawaf **AL GHAMDI**	(20) 21.01.99
1	Abdullah **AL MAYOUF**	(32) 23.01.87
30	Mohammed **AL WAKED**	(27) 31.12.91

DEFENDERS

2	Mohammed **AL BREIK**	(27) 15.09.92
5	Ali **AL BULAIHI**	(30) 21.11.89
17	Abdullah **AL HAFITH**	(26) 25.12.92
12	Yasser **AL SHAHRANI**	(27) 25.05.92
70	Mohammed **JAHFALI**	(29) 24.10.90
20	**JANG** Hyun-soo (SKo)	(28) 28.09.91
13	Hassan **KADESH**	(27) 06.09.92
22	Amiri **KURDI**	(28) 11.09.91

MIDFIELDERS

24	Nawaf **AL ABED**	(29) 26.01.90
29	Salem **AL DAWSARI**	(28) 19.08.91
10	Mohammad **AL SHALHOUB**	(39) 08.12.80
27	Hattan **BAHEBRI**	(27) 16.07.92
3	**CARLOS EDUARDO** (Bra)	(30) 17.10.89
19	Andre **CARRILLO** (Per)	(28) 14.06.91
6	Gustavo **CUELLAR** (Col)	(27) 14.10.92
28	Mohamed **KANNO**	(25) 22.09.94
8	Abdullah **OTAYF**	(27) 03.08.92

FORWARDS

9	Sebastian **GIOVINCO** (Ita)	(32) 26.01.87
18	Bafetimbi **GOMIS** (Fra)	(34) 06.08.85
77	Omar **KHARBIN** (Syr)	(25) 15.01.94

COACH

	Razvan **LUCESCU** (Rom)	(50) 17.02.69

AL SADD (Qat)

GOALKEEPERS

1	Saad **AL SHEEB**	(29) 19.02.90
22	Meshaal **BARSHAM**	(21) 14.02.98
83	**YOUSEF ABDULLAH**	(17) 30.10.02

DEFENDERS

66	Yasser **ABUBAKAR**	(27) 10.01.92
52	Hussain **BAHZAD**	(21) 08.04.98
3	Abdelkarim **HASSAN**	(26) 28.08.93
12	Hamid **ISMAIL**	(32) 12.09.87
2	**PEDRO MIGUEL**	(29) 06.08.90
6	Tarek **SALMAN**	(22) 05.12.97

MIDFIELDERS

45	Akram **AFIF**	(23) 18.11.96
20	Salem **AL HAJRI**	(23) 10.04.96
10	Hassan **AL HAYDOS**	(29) 11.12.90
23	Hashim **ALI**	(19) 17.08.00
8	Ali **ASSADALLA**	(26) 19.01.93
85	**FAISAL MOHAMMED**	(18) 13.01.01
14	**GABI** (Spa)	(36) 10.07.83
5	**JUNG** Woo-young (Sko)	(29) 14.12.89
16	Boualem **KHOUKHI**	(29) 07.09.90
61	Mostafa **TAREQ**	(18) 28.03.01
19	**NAM** Tae-hee (SKo)	(28) 03.07.91

FORWARDS

9	Abdulaziz **AL ANSARI**	(27) 19.02.92
11	Baghdad **BOUNEDJAH** (Alg)	(28) 24.11.91
99	Rami **SUHAIL**	(19) 27.05.00

COACH

	XAVI (Spa)	(39) 25.01.80

ESPERANCE (Tun)

GOALKEEPERS

1	Moez **BEN CHERIFIA**	(28) 24.06.91
21	Mohamed Sedki **DABCHI**	(20) 28.10.99
19	Rami **JRIDI**	(34) 25.04.85

DEFENDERS

30	Abdelkader **BEDRANE** (Alg)	(27) 02.04.92
12	Khalil **CHEMMAM**	(32) 24.07.87
23	Ilyes **CHETTI** (Alg)	(24) 22.01.95
5	Chamseddine **DHAOUADI**	(32) 16.01.87
24	Iheb **MBARKI**	(27) 14.02.92
6	Mohamed **YACOUBI**	(29) 05.10.90

MIDFIELDERS

25	Fedi **BEN CHOUG**	(24) 12.03.95
18	Raouf **BENGUIT** (Alg)	(23) 05.04.96
27	Mohamed Ali **BEN ROMDHANE**	(20) 06.09.99
3	Kwame **BONSU** (Gha)	(25) 25.09.94
15	Fousseny **COULIBALY** (IvC)	(30) 10.08.89
22	Sameh **DERBALI**	(33) 23.11.86
28	Mohamed Amine **MESKINI**	(22) 05.06.97

FORWARDS

8	Anice **BADRI**	(29) 08.09.90
7	Billel **BENSAHA** (Alg)	(25) 18.02.94
10	Hamdou **ELHOUNI** (Lby)	(25) 12.02.94
13	Raed **FEDAA**	(22) 20.05.97
14	Haythem **JOUINI**	(26) 07.05.93
11	Taha Yassine **KHENISSI**	(27) 06.01.92
9	Ibrahim **OUATTARA** (IvC)	(29) 04.08.90

COACH

	Moine **CHAABANI**	(38) 18.06.81

FLAMENGO (Bra)

GOALKEEPERS

1	Diego **ALVES**	(34) 24.06.85
22	Gabriel **BATISTA**	(21) 03.06.98
37	**CESAR**	(27) 27.01.92

DEFENDERS

16	**FILIPE LUIS**	(34) 09.08.85
4	Pablo **MARI** (Spa)	(26) 31.08.93
13	**RAFINHA**	(34) 07.09.85
6	**RENE**	(27) 14.09.92
44	**RHODOLFO**	(33) 11.08.86
2	**RODINEI**	(27) 29.01.92
3	**RODRIGO CAIO**	(26) 17.08.93
26	Matheus **THULER**	(20) 10.03.99

MIDFIELDERS

5	Willian **ARAO**	(27) 12.03.92
14	Giorgian **DE ARRASCAETA** (Uru)	(25) 01.06.94
10	**DIEGO**	(34) 28.02.85
8	**GERSON**	(22) 20.05.97
25	Robert **PIRIS DA MOTTA** (Par)	(25) 26.07.94
19	**REINIER**	(17) 19.01.02
7	Everton **RIBEIRO**	(30) 10.04.89

FORWARDS

9	Gabriel **BARBOSA**	(23) 30.08.96
28	Orlando **BERRIO** (Col)	(28) 14.02.91
27	**BRUNO HENRIQUE**	(28) 30.12.90
29	**LINCOLN**	(19) 16.12.00
11	**VITINHO**	(26) 09.10.93

COACH

	Jorge **JESUS** (Por)	(65) 24.07.54

HIENGHENE SPORT (NwC)

GOALKEEPERS

34	Jacques **NYIKEINE**	(23) 09.02.96
1	Rocky **NYIKEINE**	(27) 26.05.92
31	Christopher **YEIWENE**	(18) 14.12.00

DEFENDERS

30	Yvanoe **BAMY**	(27) 08.07.92
27	Emile **BEARUNE**	(29) 07.02.90
5	Jordan **DINET**	(27) 01.06.92
2	Joris **GORENDIAWE**	(29) 18.07.90
4	Bruno **HYANEM**	(22) 23.01.97
13	Roy **KAYARA**	(29) 02.05.90
28	Franck **SINEM**	(31) 29.01.88
3	William **YENTAO**	(31) 08.12.88

MIDFIELDERS

19	Joseph **ATHALE**	(24) 11.07.95
8	Geordy **GONY**	(25) 15.05.94
10	Miguel **KAYARA**	(33) 11.08.86
16	Kohei **MATSUMOTO** (Jap)	(30) 03.05.89
6	Cedric **SANSOT**	(30) 13.04.89
20	Marcos Paulo **SANTOS** (Bra)	(21) 01.03.98
18	Kevin **TEIN**	(35) 26.03.84
22	Pedro **VILELA** (Por)	(22) 18.08.97

FORWARDS

9	Brice **DAHITE**	(28) 21.06.91
7	Antony **KAI**	(23) 13.06.96
11	Bertrand **KAI**	(36) 06.06.83
12	Antoine **ROINE**	(27) 16.04.92

COACH

	Felix **TAGAWA** (Tah)	(43) 23.03.76

Debutant...Roy Kayara

Semi-final scorer ...Rogelio Funes Mori

LIVERPOOL (Eng)

GOALKEEPERS

13	**ADRIAN** (Spa)	(32) 03.01.87
1	**ALISSON** (Bra)	(27) 02.10.92
22	Andy **LONERGAN**	(36) 19.10.83

DEFENDERS

66	Trent **ALEXANDER-ARNOLD**	(21) 07.10.98
12	Joe **GOMEZ**	(22) 23.05.97
51	Ki-Jana **HOEVER** (Hol)	(17) 18.01.02
26	Andrew **ROBERTSON** (Sco)	(25) 11.03.94
72	Sepp **VAN DEN BERG** (Hol)	(17) 20.12.01
4	Virgil **VAN DIJK** (Hol)	(28) 08.07.91
76	Neco **WILLIAMS** (Wal)	(18) 13.04.01

MIDFIELDERS

14	Jordan **HENDERSON**	(29) 17.06.90
48	Curtis **JONES**	(18) 30.01.01
8	Naby **KEITA** (Gui)	(24) 10.02.95
20	Adam **LALLANA**	(31) 10.05.88
7	James **MILNER**	(33) 04.01.86
15	Alex **OXLADE-CHAMBERLAIN**	(26) 15.08.93
23	Xherdan **SHAQIRI** (Swi)	(28) 10.10.91
5	Georginio **WIJNALDUM** (Hol)	(29) 11.11.90

FORWARDS

67	Harvey **ELLIOTT**	(16) 04.04.03
10	Sadio **MANE** (Sen)	(27) 10.04.92
27	Divock **ORIGI** (Blg)	(24) 18.04.95
9	**ROBERTO FIRMINO** (Bra)	(28) 02.10.91
11	Mohamed **SALAH** (Egy)	(27) 15.06.92

MANAGER

	Jurgen **KLOPP** (Ger)	(52) 16.06.67

MONTERREY (Mex)

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marcelo **BAROVERO** (Arg)	(35) 18.02.84
22	Luis **CARDENAS**	(26) 15.09.93
24	Edson **RESENDEZ**	(23) 12.01.96

DEFENDERS

15	Jose Maria **BASANTA** (Arg)	(35) 03.04.84
6	Edson **GUTIERREZ**	(23) 19.01.96
19	Miguel **LAYUN**	(31) 25.06.88
33	Stefan **MEDINA** (Col)	(27) 14.06.92
3	Cesar **MONTES**	(22) 24.02.97
4	Nicolas **SANCHEZ** (Arg)	(33) 04.02.86
11	Leonel **VANGIONI** (Arg)	(32) 05.05.87
23	Johan **VASQUEZ**	(21) 22.10.98

MIDFIELDERS

17	Jesus **GALLARDO**	(25) 15.08.94
21	Alfonso **GONZALEZ**	(25) 05.09.94
25	Jonathan **GONZALEZ**	(20) 13.04.99
94	William **MEJIA**	(20) 21.04.99
32	Maximiliano **MEZA** (Arg)	(26) 15.12.92
16	Celso **ORTIZ** (Par)	(30) 26.01.89
20	Rodolfo **PIZARRO**	(25) 15.02.94
29	Carlos **RODRIGUEZ**	(22) 03.01.97

FORWARDS

7	Rogelio **FUNES MORI** (Arg)	(28) 05.03.91
8	Dorlan **PABON** (Col)	(31) 24.01.88
10	Jonathan **URRETAVISCAYA** (Uru)	(29) 19.03.90
14	Angel **ZALDIVAR**	(25) 08.02.94

COACH

	Antonio **MOHAMED** (Arg)	(49) 02.04.70

(ages as of 11.12.19)

Tough...Sampdoria's Gaston Ramirez is challenged by Ivan Radovanovic (left) and Francesco Cassata during December's game

GENOA V SAMPDORIA

The old meets the new in the Derby della Lanterna

Named after the main lighthouse in the city of Genoa's port, the clash between Italy's oldest side and the country's newest continuously operating club will celebrate its 100th game in May.

Founded in 1893, Genoa won nine league titles and one Coppa Italia before Sampdoria had even seen the light of day. But those golden days are long gone and the *Rossoblu* have won nothing of note since.

Meanwhile Samp – who emerged in 1946 from the merger of Sampierdarenese and Andrea Doria – were Serie A champions in 1991, have four Italian Cups to their credit, won the European Cup-winners Cup in 1990 and were European Cup runners-up two years later.

With Genoa drawing support mostly from the city centre, they like to remind their Sampdoria counterparts from the outlying areas of their place, and in 2011 fans unveiled a banner that read: "The city does not want you Sampdoria...leave Genoa now!"

Yet for all their past squabbles, fans of both clubs did the city proud in 2018 when they came together to pay their respects to the 43 people who lost their lives when the city's Morandi bridge collapsed that August. WS

Shared...both clubs call Stadio Luigi Ferraris home

CLASSIC ENCOUNTERS

1946 Nov 3
Sampdoria make an early statement of their intent to displace Genoa as the city's top dogs, winning the first-ever derby 3-0.

1990 Nov 25
Genoa end a 13-year barren spell with a 2-1 victory, although Sampdoria have the last laugh and win the Serie A title that season.

2019 Dec 14
Sampdoria's 1-0 win in their "away" fixture earlier this season sees them increase their head-to-head record to 39 victories, with 24 defeats and 36 draws.

ON BOTH SIDES

GIUSEPPE BALDINI
| 1946-50, 1953-55; (coach) 1965-66
| 1950-51

LUIGI DELNERI
| 1980-81; (coach) 2009-10
| (coach) 2012-13

VINCENZO MONTELLA
| 1995-96
| 1996-99, 2007-08; (coach) 2015-16

LUIGI CAGNI
| (coach) 1998-99
| (coach) 2000-01

DELIO ROSSI
| (coach) 1999-2000
| (coach) 2013-14

Published mid November – Cover price £39.95

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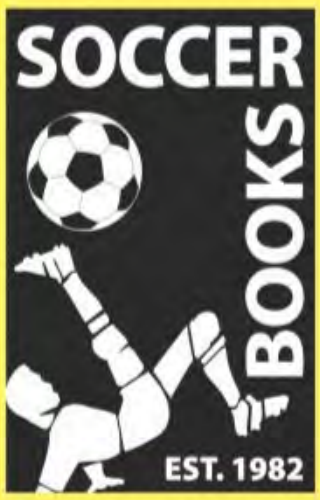

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